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SCRUTINY

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SCOTT FITZGERALD

THE nineteen-twenties may be said to have ended decisively in 1936 when Edward VIII abdicated. Fitzgerald was then forty and lived another four years. Since 1931 people had been huddling into convoy again, seeking mutual reassurance amidst the political confusion, the economic hazards and misery, and the moral discomfort of their time. Fitzgerald's later years provided the conventional intelligentsia of the nineteen-thirties with an assurance of their superior wisdom and seriousness; to this extent they had a point in common with the simpler members of their herd, whose attitude at the time of Fitzgerald's death was reflected by a column-writer called Westbrook Pegler in an obituary comment that seems to rank with J. C. Squire on D. H. Lawrence. Fitzgerald accepted his role of horrid warning to playboys as he had accepted his earlier role in the nineteen-twenties. With a characteristic habit of trust in a surrounding friendliness that by now he knew to be lacking, he attempted no concealment of the fact that he had gone to pieces. He openly discussed aspects of his case in *The Crack-Up*, and its publication as articles in *Esquire* helped him to pay for his drink, his daughter's education and the care of his schizophrenic wife. 'The author of *Biographia Literaria*' says Eliot, 'was already a ruined man. Sometimes, however, to be a "ruined man" is itself a vocation'. And we have Fitzgerald's frequently quoted remark, 'I talk with the authority of failure—Ernest [Hemingway] with the authority of success. We could never sit across the table again'. And he was, somehow, a failure, in spite of making and spending vastly more money, achieving more fame, and living with more courage than most of us dream of.

The book Mr. Kazin has edited[1] is one of the gestures of reparation that are now being freely made not only, I think, to Fitzgerald but by implication to some of the qualities of the nineteen-twenties. At the present time we question the nineteen-thirties' departure from the individual as a centre of human evaluation and its resort on the one hand to bogusly tough cynicism and on the other to various forms of righteousness through organization. The nineteen-thirties felt like a collection of families (political, religious, literary and so on), each with its black sheep, whereas the 'twenties had consisted of dispersed individuals looking for contact with other individuals. The change in the 'thirties was not altogether gain.

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[1] *F. Scott Fitzgerald: the Man and his Work*. Edited by Alfred Kazin. New York: The World Publishing Company, 1951, 221 pp., $3.00.

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Mr. Kazin's book is made up of reprinted essays and reviews by people who thought well of Fitzgerald's work or at least took it seriously, with an introduction in which Mr. Kazin suggests the significance of Fitzgerald's changing role among the American writers of 1920 to 1945. Through a great many of the essays there runs, because of the large element of autobiography in his fiction, a barely concealed preoccupation with Fitzgerald as a person; and with the renewed interest in him there has appeared an excellent biography by Arthur Mizener,[2] in which the facts of his life, well documented, and his expression of moods and opinions in his letters and journals are presented in a coherent, organized form, and fortunately without the distortion of half-baked psychological interpretation. Several reviewers have under-rated the book, apparently because it has only made the life understandable and has not given the reviewers understanding.

As a boy Fitzgerald was his mother's spoilt darling. She dominated his father, who had no worldly success but for whom Fitzgerald felt affection all his life, with steady respect for his moral values. The attachment to the father is all in the background; in the foreground of his boyhood and youth were the efforts of self-display by which he enjoyed to the full the doting admiration of his mother. All through his life in fact he was under self-generated pressure to retain the amazed esteem of women. He expresses it in the early verse of his own with which he prefaced *The Great Gatsby*:

> Then wear the gold hat, if that will move her;
> If you can bounce high, bounce for her too,
> Till she cry 'Lover, gold-hatted, high-bouncing lover,
> I must have you!'

In *Tender is the Night* his cracking-up hero has to make a fool of himself by attempting a display of water-sports far beyond his present physique. It illustrates the intimate fusion of Fitzgerald's fiction and his knowledge of his own character that three years *after* the book appeared he damaged his shoulder badly in attempting too high a dive, 'trying to show off for Zelda' (his wife, who was on a visit from her hospital during one of the remissions of her illness).

By contrast with the tremendous demands he made on himself to pay for a way of life that would keep women constantly delighted with him, he saw the role of women themselves as immeasurably easier. They were justified in his novels simply by being women and looking attractive. They seemed, in the upper economic levels of his culture, to enjoy a sanctioned dependence as a result of the mere good fortune of their sex; and to the mother-spoilt boy this role could hardly fail to appeal. Naturally, it was ambivalent to him. Mr. Mizener puts it clearly; he shows that Fitzgerald loved

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[2] *The Far Side of Paradise: a Biography of F. Scott Fitzgerald.* By Arthur Mizener. Boston: Houghton Miffin, 1951.

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Zelda's complete belief in her right to have the things she liked and leave others to take the responsibility, but also that he saw early on what he said much later to his daughter, that being 'one of the eternal children of this world' is 'a thing people will stand until they realize the awful toll exacted from others'. But he wanted to have a share in Zelda's role:

> There'd be an orchestra
> Bingo! Bango!
> Playing for us
> To dance the tango,
> And people would clap
> When we arose,
> At her sweet face
> And my new clothes.

Women had a further appeal to him because the range of values conventionally left to them to develop in our culture—such as gentleness, considerateness, impulsiveness—was a range that he shared, in spite of his occasional savageness. In a country where, to quote an American child psychologist, the typical boy is a fugitive from the word 'cissy', Fitzgerald not only wanted to be the daring man who won women's esteem, he wanted to be a woman as well. Living himself imaginatively into women's lives came readily to him. Mr. Mizener describes an early phase of identification with his younger sister and his efforts to spur her on to the 'romantic social success' that he himself wanted. More flippantly, at Princeton, he enjoyed the display of his make-up as 'the Most Beautiful Show-Girl' in the Triangle Club's musical play. Later in life his daughter was christened Frances (his own unused first name being Francis) and was always known as Scottie; and he lived her university life for her so eagerly and anxiously that one of his friends said 'Poor Scott, he had to go through Princeton and Vassar too!' The young woman's view of things and the possibilities of her life constantly recur in his novels, and in *The Last Tycoon* he was trying to present the whole story through her eyes, in spite of the great structural difficulties that resulted. The divided mind that he brought to his masculine role would no doubt be seen by some psycho-analysts as one of the main causes of the alcoholism that began in boyhood and ruined his life, but if there were homosexual trends in him they were not overt.

He was divided in mind about women too. There was a conflict between his liking for their values in the main and his own moral standards by which some common traits in the women around him stood condemned. Their deceitfulness was alien to him and in *The Great Gatsby* he presents his narrator's regretful recognition of it in Jordon Baker, adding 'It made no difference to me. Dishonesty in a woman is a thing you never blame deeply—I was casually sorry, and then I forgot'. The willingness of women to use men for their convenience without for a moment losing the complacent certainty of their own merit appears in Nicole and her sister

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Baby Warren after the hero of *Tender is the Night* has cracked up in the service of Nicole and been discarded. Inevitably the mercenary, or sensibly economic, attitude of women to romantic love disturbed him. Biographically we know that Zelda broke off their engagement when his earning capacity seemed inadequate, allowing it to be renewed only when his first novel was a huge financial success. Fitzgerald knew what he had lost by her prudence and Mr. Mizener shows the autobiographical relevance of a story he made out of it, '*The Sensible Thing*':

> 'He knew that that boy of fifteen months before had had something, a trust, a warmth that was gone for ever. The sensible thing—they had done the sensible thing. He had traded his first youth for strength and carved success out of despair. But with his youth, life had carried away the freshness of his love'.

Later, in *The Crack-Up*, he put the economic implications more clearly:

> 'The man with the jingle of money in his pocket who married the girl a year later would always cherish an abiding distrust, an animosity, toward the leisure class—not the conviction of a revolutionist but the smouldering hatred of a peasant. In the years since then I have never been able to stop wondering where my friends' money came from, nor to stop thinking that at one time a sort of *droit de seigneur* might have been exercised to give one of them my girl'.

This passage is quoted again and again in the essays Mr. Kazin has collected, and always at the face value that it had for Fitzgerald. But of course it illustrates the way in which (especially in *The Crack-Up*) he could seem to give a frank account of his state of mind and yet just evade carrying introspection to the crucial point; for the fact is that since no *droit de seigneur* did exist he is simply recording the fear (perhaps unrecognized in that form) that Zelda might have sold herself to someone else if he had been outbid.

That the esteem of women seemed to him so closely connected with money and a way of life that money made possible accounts in part no doubt, but only in part, for his extravagance and consequent need to sell himself to the highest bidders in the literary market; this in spite of his wish to settle down to the serious work, slower and less lucrative, that he once or twice achieved. The fascination he found in the life of the wealthy idle with whom his enormous earnings allowed him to mix is one of the puzzling features of his personality. It is puzzling because, as several of Mr. Kazin's contributors point out, (notably Malcolm Cowley, Andrews Wanning and Lionel Trilling) he was centrally a moralist. The statement he gives to the narrator of *The Great Gatsby* describes accurately what always remained his attitude:

> 'Reserving judgments is a matter of infinite hope. I am still a little afraid of missing something if I forget that, as my father snobbishly suggested, and I snobbishly repeat, a sense of the

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> fundamental decencies is parcelled out unequally at birth. And, after boasting this way of my tolerance, I come to the admission that it has a limit'.

He was certainly not blinded to the simpler moral facts by the attraction that the rich had for him. Some of the best of his writing springs from his having entered into the wealthy life of his culture with enough gusto to convey vividly and sympathetically its desperate lightheartedness while at the same time he remained firmly grounded in those basic decencies that the nineteen-twenties were in danger of throwing out together with the canons and conventions. A perfectly sure condemnation of much of the accepted behaviour of his set pervades *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender is the Night.*

Mr. Mizener and several of the writers in Mr. Kazin's book discuss the meaning that wealth had for Fitzgerald. Its importance to him began in childhood when he was ashamed of the comparative poverty of his family, but this is such a common lower middle-class beginning that it cannot account for the lengths to which he went in the appreciation of wealth. Lionel Trilling interprets it as a recognition of the importance of an aristocracy of some sort; Charles Weir, Jr., thinks he saw wealth as giving his heroes the stature of the kings and commanders of older tragedy. Weir also quotes the highly relevant passages from *Tender is the Night* in which the hero's excellence is indicated through the impression he makes on a rather naïve girl: 'His step was alert as if he had just come from some great doings and was hurrying on towards others. Organizer of private gaiety, curator of a richly incrusted happiness. His hat was a perfect hat and he carried a heavy stick and gloves'; and in admiring his charm the girl was 'unaware of its complexity and its lack of innocence, unaware that it was all a selection of quality rather than quantity from the run of the world's bazaar'. Although Fitzgerald could make a moral appraisal of his wealthy people he seems to have had no expectations which their cultural nullity could disappoint. He persuaded himself that their fabricated gaiety and a sort of discipline in following their own fashions embodied something that he could value, evidently some fantasy of social life at a high cultural level. But it was beyond Fitzgerald to convey the scale by which that level could be measured. Its implied association with wealth is all that clearly emerges; and that can hardly quieten our doubts about its reality or validity.

While many of the people with whom he mixed floated along buoyantly on unearned incomes, Fitzgerald had to interrupt his leisured gaieties with spells of intense effort in order to make the money that he and Zelda spent. It seems likely, from Mr. Mizener's account, that his sporadic efforts of almost superhuman productiveness were a contributory cause of his alcoholism. There is evidence of the natural protest he experienced at the terrific demand he made on himself, amongst it the feeling that Zelda had little idea of the cost of his writing. By the time he was writing the final version of *Tender is the Night* he was entirely dependent on maintaining just

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the right degree of intoxication. In a letter written after he had made himself produce the finished version, with which he was not fully satisfied, he gave an accurate account of the sort of disablement that alcohol induced, in particular its limiting of the range of material that he could co-ordinate while he wrote, although it allowed him to keep at the limited job of the moment without intolerable protest:

> 'If a mind is slowed up ever so little it lives in the individual part of a book rather than in a book as a whole; memory is dulled. I would give anything if I hadn't had to write Part III of *Tender is the Night*, entirely on stimulant'.

His insight into the effects of his drinking and his willingness to make his own contribution to any autopsy that might be undertaken are characteristic of his attitude to the addiction. Repeatedly in his fiction he offers unsparing reports of the incidents of alcoholism. *The Beautiful and Damned*, the first book in which a partly autobiographical treatment of his marriage occurs, gives an accurate account of the initial steps and the accelerating slither into drinking bouts and of the insidious onset of irremediable habits of drinking. But there is always something missing. The need to drink is never convincingly explained. Fitzgerald's insight did not penetrate to that, with the result that although he could observe himself ruthlessly he could never find the key to his addiction and consequently could never bring it under control. It is here that one sees how little effective help he was given in spite of the devoted goodwill of friends and doctors; the friends could give sympathetic advice and make appeals, the doctors could give warnings and resuscitate him after each bout. One doctor at least attempted a systematic treatment with the aid of drugs, but again the crucial insight into the meaning of the addiction was lacking and it was an unequal struggle that went on between pharmacist and distiller.

The relatively slight transmutation that Fitzgerald's experience underwent before being recorded as his fiction explains much of the difficulty of assessing the value of his work. For some people the close fusion with the life tends to exaggerate the worth of the fiction. The myth-hunger of America, trying to create a manageable past out of an immense present, perhaps leads critics to fasten on Fitzgerald as a way of identifying some of the valuable streaks in the life of the nineteen-twenties, particularly the brand of courage and sincerity with which many people at that time tried to establish their personal values without the distortion of ready-made conventions. The sense of waste and the avowal of failure that marked his life are characteristic enough of his period to contribute to his value as a culture-hero. The fact that for most of the time instead of doing his best work he wrote for the popular market (and that in his best work he still aimed at popular success) gives him a special American value, as John Dos Passos points out in Mr. Kazin's book. One suspects that the value as myth and the value as writer fuse at this point and partly account for an over-estimate of his

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achievement in *The Last Tycoon*, the unfinished last novel. 'Even in their unfinished state', says John Dos Passos, 'these fragments, I believe, are of sufficient dimensions to raise the level of American fiction to follow in some such way as Marlowe's blank verse line raised the whole level of Elizabethan verse'.

At the other extreme the autobiographical qualities of his writing lead some people to adopt a defensively negative attitude that under-rates his work. Glenway Wescott, in the essay that Mr. Kazin reprints, writes:

> 'The great thing about Fitzgerald was his candor; verbal courage; simplicity . . . . The thing, I think, that a number of recent critics have most disliked about him is his confessional way, the personal tone, the *tête-a-tête* or man-to-man style, first person singular. He remarked it himself in *The Crack-Up*: "There are always those to whom all self-revelation is contemptible".'

The fact of his using private experience freely is probably not in itself the cause of some readers' embarrassment. Many writers, including his slightly younger contemporaries, have been at least as intimately personal as Fitzgerald and still retained their literary respectability. The trouble is that he reveals his personal weaknesses and unhappiness without hitting back with any defiance, without using the fact of his misery as evidence of his unusual sensitiveness or the injustice or futility of his environment. His handling of his weakness never contributes indirectly to his greater personal glory. This characteristic shows itself not only when he makes his heroes take the blame for misfortunes they bring on themselves but also when things go miserably wrong without much identifiable fault in the protagonists (as, for instance, in *The Beautiful and Damned*, immature as that is). If Fitzgerald cannot see where the fault lies in himself he does not find relief in protest, whether against society or the nature of things. His people rarely protest, explicitly or covertly; they more often seek relief in the unconvinced sociability and the alcohol that make their plight worse.

But the real limitations of his work also bring one back to his personal life. His lack of insight into himself at crucial points, above all into the addiction to alcohol, has more than biographical significance. It is a clue to the weakness of his most ambitious finished novel, *Tender is the Night*, which, as many of Mr. Kazin's writers complain, leaves the collapse of the hero essentially unexplained. What Fitzgerald could not understand in himself he could not account for in his hero. It is not satisfactory to use biographical material to supply the place of what he failed to put into the novels, and this seems to me the inadequacy of Mr. Mizener's defence of *Tender is the Night*. He tries hard to show that the collapse of the hero can be made intelligible and acceptable by reference to Fitzgerald's theory of 'emotional bankruptcy', the idea that he uses in letters and journals to indicate the psychological condition in which he found himself towards the end of his life.

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Even if this idea had amounted to an understanding of his condition it would not be enough for Mr. Mizener to show that Fitzgerald had elaborated it privately; if it is not effectively expressed in the novel without illumination from biographical research it is not much help. In fact it seems to be only a way of describing the experience of collapse, not understanding it. He simply recorded his conviction—based on his experience—of the inevitability of cracking up; he had no insight into its causes within himself. He knew, it is true, the relevant features of his life which might with re-arrangement have given him a clearer view of his trouble. The very sad quality of *The Crack-Up* comes from the courageous frankness with which he exposes himself and the simultaneous inability to grasp the nature of his central difficulties.

The Crack-Up expressed once more, towards the end of his life, the quality of friendliness and the wish to trust in the friendliness of others that runs through all his earlier work and his life. True, it purported to express the opposite, a cynical disillusionment with generosity and trustful outflowing towards others. He goes through the gestures of having learnt his lesson, but with an exaggeration that shows how far he is from really changing his values. Mr. Mizener quotes one passage:

> 'I felt like the beady-eyed men I used to see on the commuting train from Great Neck fifteen years back . . . I was one with them now, one with the smooth articles who said:
> "I'm sorry but business is business". Or:
> "You ought to have thought of that before you got into this trouble". Or:
> "I'm not the person to see about that".
> And a smile—ah, I would get me a smile. I'm still working on that smile . . .'.

J. F. Powers, in Mr. Kazin's book, quotes a similar passage:

> 'I have now at last become a writer only . . . . It is not a matter for levity. If you are young and you should write asking to see me and learn how to be a sombre literary man writing pieces upon the state of emotional exhaustion that often overtakes writers in their prime—if you should be so young and fatuous as to do this, I would not so much as acknowledge your letter, unless you were related to someone very rich and important indeed. And if you were dying of starvation outside my window, I would go out quickly and give you the smile and the voice (if no longer the hand) and stick around until somebody raised a nickel to phone for the ambulance, that is if I thought there would be any copy in it for me'.

Disillusionment was really there, of course. He had some magnificent friends, whose loyalty he must have tested to the utmost; there were others who felt sure of their superiority and gave him good advice; and at times he met with cynical cruelty. With this rather usual sample of human experience he was disappointed. It failed

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to give the response he wanted to his generous outflowing of feeling. But impulsive friendliness was for him still the norm, and the revulsion he expresses in *The Crack-Up* is a revulsion against the social world he trusted too freely, not a genuine revulsion against his trustfulness. Some generous responsiveness that he looked for was missing. How far it was neurotic of him to look for it and how far our culture fails by denying it to such people must be for us, embedded in that culture, a difficult question to answer. It is appropriate that Keats, with his trustful and uncensored outpourings of himself, should have meant so much to Fitzgerald. It was the 'Ode to a Nightingale' from which, in spite of the publisher's objection that it had no connection with the story, Fitzgerald took the title and prefatory quotation for his novel:

> Already with thee! tender is the night . . .
> . . . But here there is no light,
> Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
> Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

The 'Ode' expresses Keats's longing (and a transient fantasy of its fulfilment) for escape from the problems of ordinary life into acceptance as part of the tender night, ruled over by the Queen-Moon, and richly adequate without any contribution from him. The novel describes the psychological bankruptcy of a man who gave himself more generously than Fitzgerald thought he could afford. That they were linked for Fitzgerald implies that his generous responsiveness and his outpouring of himself received no welcome commensurate with his great craving for welcome. The impulsive response to what he supposed to be the feelings of others is illustrated in the incident recorded by Mr. Mizener when Fitzgerald and a friend, both Yankees, visited an old Southern house which was of interest in the history of the Civil War. Suddenly Fitzgerald felt that their interest might be painful to their host, a Southerner, and he promptly launched into a fantasy about the press photographers at Appomattox and their mistake which led to the belief that Lee handed his sword to Grant in surrender. Sheer buoyancy and lightness of touch seem to have enabled him to carry it off, but one can see the expense of spirit involved in such efforts, especially if they fell flat, as some always must. No doubt there was ready acceptance of what he had to offer—everyone likes trustful and impulsive friendliness—but there was evidently too seldom the reciprocal flow of feeling that Fitzgerald wanted. Drink gave him a delusive consolation. But nothing could answer his longing for the complete, undemanding acceptance of himself that he found symbolized by Keats in the tenderly enveloping night.

D. W. HARDING.

[The above contributes to a critical exchange, and will be followed by an article on Scott Fitzgerald from another point of view—Ed.]

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'THE DISSOCIATION OF SENSIBILITY'

WE can see Shakespeare both as a defender of the monarchic, hierarchic, stable 'social organism' and as anti-Protestant. The ethos which sundered mind from body, spirit from matter, intellect from emotions, as well as the progressive dynamic social theory which it fostered, he could not but react against. And in examining *Antony and Cleopatra* we are able to see how completely this issue could be staged in the country of the mind-and-heart. As a poet he was speaking from the most fundamental of motivations—self-preservation. Shakespeare was, I would say, extraordinarily acute in sensing the implications of the new trend in its effect on the unit personality and on the language and construction of poetry. And his 'prophetic soul, dreaming on things to come', was accurate in its insight; half a century later the Restoration society saw the Protestant spirit in triumph and poetry as Shakespeare understood it completely vanished. The way in which it had vanished, and the nature of that which replaced it will form the subject of subsequent analysis.

When we progress to the post-Shakespearean poetry coming before the Restoration, we find it dominated by the 'Metaphysical' school, of which John Donne is a representative example. If we should give assent to Mr. T. S. Eliot's influential critical observation to the effect that this school is characterized by a remarkably 'unified sensibility', while the Restoration writers suffered from a 'dissociation of sensibility' then we might find basis to doubt the contention that the psychological separation of thought from sense, reason from emotion, abstract from concrete, already noted with alarm by Shakespeare, progressed steadily during those years. But Eliot's view is too much regarded, it seems to me, as a self-evident truth and too little investigated. In fact, one might with profit do as Professor Willey advises we do with Hobbes, and look for the *fiat* or *utinam* in Eliot's essays. We certainly would find a great need in Eliot for the realization of the abstract idea of *unity* and of *order*. This need we might well expect in a critic whose principles were formed in the chaos following the first world war, and whose literary climate was that of a brilliant group of poets whose morale was so low that they could trust nothing but the concrete fragmentary image, completely enschematized and accomplished in a few lines. Sprat's recommendation that men in 1660 turn attention to 'every sand, every pebble, every grass, every earth, every fly', in analogy to the Greek advice that they 'repeat the alphabet over' represents a quite similar response to a post-war psychological climate. Eliot's

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case might well be seen as analogous with that of Coleridge, whose voluminous philosophical ruminations focussed on a concern for finding 'unity' in 'multeity' are best explained, from the point of view of their *fiat* or *utinam*, as psychological compensation for the fragmentary nature of his own mind witnessed by such performances as *Kubla Khan*. We might well look at the terms which Eliot feels divided and in need of unification, since they appear as just what we might expect; 'thought', and 'feeling' or 'sense'. And here we see a more closely personal imperative enforcing the motivations suggested above. Eliot is a rebel American Puritan, and the distinction of divided worlds which we have seen central to Protestant beginnings we can observe in him carrying on vigorously into our own time—perhaps, like some of the old English folk songs, better preserved as native culture there than in England. Eliot is sufficiently troubled by the effects of this schism in his own personality, and the tensions which it produces in what he calls his 'sensibility', that he makes a considerable stir about the need for a mode of poetic response in which these elements of 'thought' and 'emotion', or 'spirit' and 'matter', are not separately distinguishable, but fused into one.

The fact that his finger is on the Puritan pulse we cannot deny, nor question the rightness of the trail which led him to the early seventeenth century, as the stage for the issue. But it is Eliot's conclusion, that he has found in Donne and his school the 'unification of sensibility' which he sought, which we must subject to inspection and view with a sceptic's eye. I would suggest, in questioning this, that Eliot thought of his own sensibility at its best moments as being 'unified', that in being attracted to Donne he was being drawn to kind, and that these men who, to his observation, thought feelings and felt thoughts, as well as being linked to the structure of that church which crowned the 'social organism', represented the sort of unification of personality which would protect his own 'sensibility'. The conclusion we would draw from this, then, if we grant it, is that Eliot's 'unification of sensibility' was at best as complete as Donne's and no more. It remains to decide whether one finds the phrase 'unified sensibility' a just one for Donne and his contemporaries.

Miss Josephine Miles, in a recent American publication, has, by way of examining 'the primary language of poetry in the 1640's', while not questioning Eliot's premise, made an observation, exhaustively supported by tabular methods, which should, if followed through, seriously undermine it. Speaking of the 'Metaphysical' propensity for moving between 'divided and distinguished worlds' she says, basing herself on her tabulation of vocabulary:

> 'This sort of philosophical and practical unification, as part of the decade's assumption, whether Calvinistic or Platonical, Puritan or Cavalier, shows itself in all the poets' language and device, and perhaps it helps to explain the unanimity of usage which seems, though without as yet much basis of comparison

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to other decades, to be so particularly strong. The whole decade may in this sense be called metaphysical, in prose as well as poetry, and every poet of it be included in the term, as every one of them seems to have been included at one time or another. Or, by a specification, by a definition of degree, those poets who most employed the play between realms, who most juxtaposed by far-fetching and fused by passionate belief and skill the glorious divine and familiar domestic, may alone be called metaphysical—in which case it becomes a sort of value term, with Donne, not Jonson on the one hand or Milton on the other, as norm for us.

Eliot's and other moderns' stress upon the sensory element in the definition can, in any case, be misleading, if one thinks of sensory in modern terms, or of Eliot's own practice. The metaphysical poets, busy between gnats and angels, worked relatively little in ostensible speech upon the medial line of their own sensations and feelings; and the objects which they chose for figuring forth abstractions were by this very purpose only secondarily to be sensed. The external facts do not for Donne 'terminate in sensory experience'[1], but rather terminate in abstract relationship, his nouns technical or pronomnial, his adjectives evaluative, his verbs actively functioning, even his characteristic *sun* not so *warm* or *bright* as *busy*. Possibly vocabulary was less sensory for Donne's age than for any later age in English poetry;[2] at least it was less sensory for Donne's and Jonson's schools than for Milton's, and the distinction is one of the clearest to be seen in the whole decade. The vocabulary of sense, then, the use of sensible objects and qualities as poetic material, defines negatively rather than positively the metaphysical school if it is to be centered in Donne, Cowley, Vaughan, Carew, Cleveland, and that kind, and represents positively the counter or parallel school of Milton, Crashaw, Waller, with its emphasis upon image and description. This is not to say that sensation and quality were not vivid in the metaphysical poets, but to say rather that they were vivid in their consistent poetic focus. The literal expressive materials of Milton were, one may explicitly say, twice as sensuous as the materials of Donne. Their respective effects upon a modern reader may not suggest this fact, because the modern reader is much more sensitive to implication than to explication, and can build upon Donne's metaphors more imagery than he meant their contexts to hold. But their respective choices of poetic substance distinctly deviate in terms of a sensuous versus a conceptual medium, a descriptive versus a dramatic result'.[3]

[1]Eliot, essay on *Hamlet*, Selected Essays, p. 124-125.
[2]J. Miles, *cf. Major Adjectives in English Poetry*.
[3]Josephine Miles, *The Primary Language of Poetry in the 1640's*, University of California Publications in English, Vol. 19, No. 1, pp. 1-160, Univ. of Cal. Press, Berkely and Los Angeles, 1948, p. 131-132.

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Obviously, such terms of Miss Miles' as 'sensuous' and 'the literal expressive materials' are gravely in need of qualification, and a tabular approach to them by way of grammatical statistics is, where one is dealing with poetry, highly questionable. I have articulated my reservations as to the character of Milton's 'sensuous' properties in my next chapter, in a discussion of the transition to a prose psychology. However, a more delicate contextual approach does not belie Miss Miles' general observation, that the presiding spirit of Donne's work is that of the verb working in the space between two worlds while that of Milton is bound up with the descriptive adjective. Donne's central subject is characteristically the *relationship* of ideas—a fundamentally abstract interest. The irresponsibility with which Donne draws upon the natural physical world witnesses the nature of his contact with it—it is not the firm grasp which would betoken an acceptance of it, interest in it, respect for it, or faith in it—while his grasp of the traditional philosophies has been pointed out by Eliot and others to indicate an equally random contact with that world as well. He placed himself in suspension between what Miss Miles has termed the world of the 'gnat' and the world of the 'angel', and reached out feverishly in both directions. His major impact is that of making us aware of this space. It seems all the more strange, then, and witness to the tenacious influence of a phrase of critical jargon once it is established by a formidable voice, that Miss Miles holds on unquestioningly to Eliot's phrase 'unification of sensibility' as giving an apt description of this state of affairs. The two realms of abstract and sensible had already been divided; it was in the distance which separated them that the 'metaphysician worked between them, and Eliot's very term 'unification' implies that both elements must have been clearly distinguishable and in need of being utterly fused into one[5]—and yet Miss Miles observes that they were not so fused, but that the use of sensible objects (which represents one realm) defines negatively the metaphysical school. Still, she accepts the term as apt:

> 'The conception of unified sensibility makes significant the appearance upon the major word lists, their notably consistent mixture of heavenly and earthly reference. It applies, in fact, to all the poets of the decade and may as well include Herrick and Quarles and Jonson as Cowley and Crashaw, since all share the power, expressed in their fullest vocabulary, to bind together soul and body, divinity and profanity, in the bonds of figure. Some, even of the metaphysical poets, protested the union, finding any combination with the profane itself profane. Cowley worried about the problem, and kept turning to his unfinished *Davideis* for consolation, but kept feeling the strong responsibility of the poet to love; Vaughan and Crashaw protested the gnat in favour

[5]The etymology of Eliot's term is noteworthy—it is not 'the condition of being *one*', but the active verb *uno facere*, 'to *make one*'.

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> of the angel; Herrick divided his responsibilities. But all actually, as the major words show, made persistent reference to both worldly and heavenly levels, if not as literal subjects, then as figurative enforcements, in which the whole syntax, indeed, was turned to the task of reasoning validities in one realm in terms of their validity in the other. It was the very power of the metaphysician, as the term "unified sensibility" suggests, that his figures could work both ways . . .'.[6]

Thus effectively in contemporary criticism Eliot has succeeded in canonizing his poetic taste and the propriety of his own state of mind. This yoking 'by violence together' of two disparate realms is supposed to represent a 'unification of sensibility'; it could more accurately be regarded as an artifice, (in the course of its history running eventually to completely irresponsible extravagance) which *attempts* to make some unification between two divided realms, and the very act of which testifies, not to the 'unified' condition, but to the need for it and lack of it.

Donne furnishes us clear and useful statements in testimony of this condition. His *Anatomy of the World* (*First Anniversary*) articulates the schism of the psyche (the 'dissociation of the sensibility') as having been felt in 1611, the date of its composition, and as providing great cause for lamentation. This is a good portion of Donne's work to inspect for such a statement. His recent editor, John Hayward, remarks:

> 'In spite of their difficulty, the "Anniversaries" merit careful attention, for they mark a period of transition in Donne's development from poet to divine'.[7]

Mr. Hayward, however, does us ill service in terming the poem a 'preposterous eulogy' because of its titular connection with the death of Mistress Elizabeth Drury; this seems to me to represent incomplete recognition of the convention for occasional verse prevalent in Donne's time. The poem has really nothing to do with Mistress Drury, but is a philosophical essay on the death of the 'soul', which Donne claims has taken place. The 'she' of the poem consistently means 'the soul', and 'the soul' is seen to be, in Donne's language, very much what the phrase 'unified sensibility' implies in Eliot's terminology. And, Donne says,

> Shee, shee, is dead; shee's dead: when thou know'st this,
> Thou know'st how wan a Ghost this our world is.

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[6]*The Primary Language of Poetry in the 1640's*, p. 130.

[7]John Hayward, *ed.*, *Donne*, London, The Nonesuch Press, 1946, p. 194. [The reader may care to know that Mr. Marius Bewley, independently of Mr. Smith, has detected in Donne's poem a significance in relation to 'the dissociation of sensibility'. The essay will appear in the *Kenyon Review*—probably in the Summer Number—Ed.]

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The death has taken place because the soul's two elements or 'realms' in life and health inextricably welded, have drawn apart—the realms of mind and body, thought and sense. (The body is considered the seat of the senses, as the mind is of the thoughts, and the heart, as captain of the body, is the reservoir of the senses. This substitution seems always to afford a valid reading, and forms a lead into the terms of reason versus passion which the later part of the century favoured in phrasing the same schism). Donne describes the drawing apart:

> And as our bodies, so our minds are crampt:
> 'Tis shrinking, not close weaving that hath thus,
> In minde, and body both bedwarfed us.
> Wee seeme ambitious, Gods whole worke t'undoe;
> Of nothing hee made us, and we strive too,
> To bring ourselves to nothing back; . . .

In *King Lear*, five years earlier, the line was, 'Nothing will come of nothing', and in *Antony and Cleopatra* it is also pictured as dissolution into colourless water. The *Anatomie* continues:

> Corruptions in our braines, or in our hearts,
> Poysoning the fountains, whence our actions spring
> Endanger us.

The death of the 'soul' by this cleavage is figured as related to the destruction of two qualities: colour, and proportion.

> Sight is the noblest sense of any one,
> Yet sight hath only colour to feed on,
> And colour is decai'd:

Thus the sensory properties of life have been undermined. And along with the senses have gone the other characteristics of the living soul which so closely related to the senses that he groups them as being the two elements of beauty:

> Beauty, that's colour, and proportion.

This 'proportion' is, of course, the old familiar, the idea of *order*, or *form*. And Donne phrases it directly in social terms; describing the living soul:

> . . . contrary
> Both Elements, and Passions liv'd at peace
> In her, who caus'd all Civill war to cease.
> Shee, after whom, what forme soe'r we see,
> Is discord, and rude incongruitie;
> Shee, shee is dead, shee's dead; when thou know'st this,
> Thou know'st how ugly a monster this world is:

Then a more direct passage lays the whole business directly at the door of the Puritans:

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'Tis all in peeces, all cohærence gone;
All just supply, and all Relation:
Prince, Subject, Father, Sonne, are things forgot,
For every man alone thinkes he hath got
To be a Phœnix, and that then can bee
None of that kinde, of which he is, but hee.

This cannot fail to recall Tawney's summary of the character of Lutheranism:

> 'The world was divided into . . . spirit and matter. The division between them was absolute; no human effort could span the chasm'. 'The medieval conception of the social order, which had regarded it as a highly articulated organism of members contributing in their different degrees to a spiritual purpose, was shattered and differences which had been distinctions within a larger unity were now set in irreconcilable antagonism to each other'. 'The Christian has a sufficient guide in the Bible and in his own conscience . . . it was their inner life alone that could partake of this sanctification'.[8]

And if indeed this split has taken place, and killed the 'soul', which is our divine part in its *earthly* form, as Donne testifies it has, then there is but one recourse, which Donne suggests himself:

But as thou sawest it rotten at the heart,
Thou seest a Hectique feaver hath got hold
Of the whole substance, not to be contrould,
And that thou hast but one way, not t'admit
The world's infection, to be none of it.

We might observe how congenial is this resolution to Mr. Eliot's temperament. And we see the young Donne, in 1611, already committed to an abstract world, separate from, and maintaining only an unavoidable and tangential contact with, the world of sensory reality.

In the Donne genre, although we do not have in any real sense (other than this literary device of 'binding together in the bonds of figure') a unity of the two worlds of thought and sense, abstract and concrete, intellectual and physical, we do have, in this 'binding' action, an *attempt* at unification, productive of those 'tensions', etc., which readers of some generations have found so fascinating, others so reprehensible. (For example, Miss Miles remarks: 'These Jonson hated, the "recesses of learning", "disgusting hyperboles", "violent factions", mixed high and low, the very juxtaposition of which to Eliot proved a unified sensibility'.[9] One sees how not only the 'mixed high and low' but even the 'recesses of learning' characteristic of Eliot's own poetic mode are

[8]Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, p. 98.
[9]Miles, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

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backed up by this value term of his, the motivation and historical impropriety of which I have discussed above.) However, the attempt is not long sustained. Why this should be, there is more than the steady advance of Puritanism to be adduced: there is a complexity of mutually reinforcing developments.

Professor Butterfield, dealing with the scientific movement writes:

> 'Apart from such developments, the possibilities of scientific experiment were likely themselves to be limited until certain forms of production and technique had been elaborated in society generally. Indeed, the scientific, the industrial, and the agrarian revolutions form such a system of complex and interrelated changes that in the lack of a microscopic examination we have to heap them all together as aspects of a general movement, which by the last quarter of the seventeenth century was palpably altering the face of the earth. The hazard consists not in putting all these things together and rolling them into one great bundle of complex change, but in thinking that we know how to disentangle them—what we see is the total intricate network of changes, and it is difficult to say that any one of these was the simple result of the scientific revolution itself'.[10]

And in another passage, Butterfield stresses the connection of this entire complex of change with that development which I have continually indicated as so fundamental in its relationship to the literature we have been examining, and so inextricably linked to the Puritan movement—the shift to a bourgeois mercantile culture:

> 'This new chapter in the history of civilization really opened when in 1660, after a long period of internal upheaval and civil war, a comparative political stability was brought about not merely in France, but in general throughout the Continent, where on all sides the institution of monarchy had been gravely challenged but had managed to reassert itself and to re-establish public order. In fact, what we have already noticed in the case of France was still more true in England and Holland in the seventeenth century—we see the power in intellectual matters of what, in spite of the objectionableness of the term, we must call the middle class. And just as the Renaissance was particularly associated with city-states (or virtual city-states) in Italy, South Germany and the Netherlands, where the commerce and economic development had produced an exhilarating civil life, so in the last quarter of the seventeenth century the intellectual changes were centred on the English Channel, where commerce had been making so remarkable a rise and so much prosperity seem to have been achieved. The city-state disappeared from history in the first half of the sixteenth century; but on the wider platform of the nation-state the future still belonged to what we call the middle classes.

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[10]Butterfield, *The Origins of Modern Science*, p. 169-170.

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If we have in mind merely the intellectual changes of the period we are considering, they have been described by one historian under the title, *La crise de la conscience européanne*—a title which itself gives some indication of the importance of the transition that was taking place. What was in question was a colossal secularization of thought in every possible realm of ideas at the same time, after the extraordinarily strong religious character of much of the thinking of the seventeenth century . . . . The whole story of the Renaissance shows within the limits of the city-state how the exhilarating rise of an urban civilization is liable to issue in a process of secularization—the priest as well as the noble loses the power that he was able to possess in a more conservative agrarian world. Something parallel has happened over and over again in the case of nation-states when not only have towns become really urban in character—which is late in the case of England, for example—but when a sort of leadership in society has passed to the towns, and literature itself comes to have a different character'.[11]

It is exactly the terms of this 'different' character of literature, resultant of a shift to an urban culture, which is the subject of this investigation. And this brings us to the reason why the outward social triumph of the Puritans with the Rebellion, while carrying on that 'dissociation of sensibility' implicit from the start in its very doctrine, exhibited it in a radically different though not at all unrelated form from the 'divided realms' which troubled the late Elizabethans and 'Metaphysicals' of the earlier half of the century. It is because the Protestant religious theory was able to make itself a successful revolutionary social force to depose the monarchic hierarchy only *through* its wedding with the rapidly rising class of the progressive mercantile bourgeoisie, and it is through this union that new elements, which determine the 'different' character of Restoration language and literature from what has gone before, are added to the old schism of 'thought' from 'sense'. For this change, which converted the Protestant blue-print to an actual mechanism, we have to postpone beginnings until the Civil War. Professor Tawney bears out this picture; he writes:

'The growth, triumph and transformation of the Puritan spirit was the most fundamental movement of the seventeenth century. Puritanism, not the Tudor secession from Rome, was the true English Reformation, and it is from its struggle against the old order that an England which is unmistakably modern emerges . . .'[12]

If the Reformation was a revolution, it was a revolution which left intact both the lower ranges of ecclesiastical organization and the traditional scheme of social thought . . . . The

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 166-167.
[12] Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, p. 198.

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assumption of all is that the traditional teaching of the church as to social ethics is as binding on men's consciences after the Reformation as it had been before it'.[13]

Whatever its alliance with the middle classes might have been from the start, the imputation to Puritanism of embodying actively the principles of dynamic (hence formless and orderless) progress in economic and social thought must be put off until the Civil War had sealed the compact and effectively created the amalgam of Protestant and business enterpriser which is responsible for the peculiarities of Restoration literary expression. Tawney says:

'To the Puritan of any period in the century between the accession of Elizabeth and the Civil War, the suggestion that he was the friend of economic or social licence would have seemed as wildly inappropriate as it would have appeared to most of his critics, who taunted him, except in the single matter of usury, with an intolerable meticulousness . . . . While social reformers in the sixteenth century could praise Calvin for his economic rigour, their successors in Restoration England, if of one persuasion, denounced him as the parent of economic licence, if of another, applauded Calvinist communities for their commercial enterprise and their freedom from antiquated prejudices on the subject of economic morality. So little do those who shoot the arrows of the spirit know where they will light'.[14]

However interesting and enlightening then, may be an examination of pre-Rebellion poetic device, the full and effective development of the 'disassociation' must be looked for after what Tawney calls 'the great divide of the Civil War, following which England could justly be called 'the Paradise of the bourgeoisie, in which the prosperous merchants shouldered easily aside the impoverished bearers of aristocratic names'.[15] And if the process of 'disassociation' had previously, in its influence on such as Donne, produced a swing towards the abstract, this last noted merger connected with the Civil War and after, tended quite the other way—towards the solid, worldly and material. For Tawney describes it as 'the increased influence on thought and public affairs acquired at the Restoration by the commercial classes, whose temper was a ruthless materialism'.[16] A pamphlet in 1671, entitled *The Present Interest of England Stated by a Lover of His King and Country*, could witness the merger in the words:

'The domestic interest of England lieth in the advancement of trade by removing all obstructions both in city and country, and providing such laws as may help it, and make it most easy,

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 154.
[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 213, 227.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 208.
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 266.

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especially in giving liberty of conscience to all Protestant Non-conformists and denying it to Papists'.[17]

For there could be no doubt but that the tide had turned, and that the Restoration was not in any real sense a restoration of the old monarchic order of society. Pepys, beginning his diary in 1660, had in that year the highest hopes that the old world was back, and Dryden in *Astraea Redux* voiced the hope, or even conviction, that with the King's return had come a return to order and firm structure:

> His future role is into method brought,
> As they who first proportion understand
> With easy practice reach a master's hand.

But seven years later Pepys must write:

'. . .; the King is mad at her entertaining Jermyn, and she is mad at Jermyn's going from her; so they are all mad; and thus the kingdom is governed'.[18]

or again;

'Creed tells me, he finds all things mighty dull at Court; and that they now begin to lie long in bed; it being, as we suppose, not seemly for them to be found playing and gaming as they used to be; nor that their minds are at ease enough to follow those sports and yet not knowing how to employ themselves, though there be work enough for their thoughts and councils and pains, they keep long in bed. But he thinks with me that there is nothing in the world can help us but the King's looking after his business and his officers, and that, with that, we may yet do well; but otherwise must be undone; nobody at this day taking care of anything nor hath anybody to call him to account for it . . . . So that he fears, and I do no less; that God Almighty cannot bless us while we keep in this disorder that we are in'.[19]

Not only does the new monarchy suffer from internal disintegration and the corruption of King and officers, but—a considerably more telling shift in centre of power and control—it is forced to turn to the urban bourgeoisie for financial support. And one can generally follow the rule, 'where the money lies, there always lies also the actual government'. Pepys enters, in 1666, the observation:

'He was surprised when I told him I heard that the King did intend to borrow some money of the City, and would know who had spoke of it to me; I told him Sir Ellis Layton this afternoon. He says it is a dangerous discourse, for that the City certainly will not be invited to do it; and then, for the King to ask it and be denied, will be the beginning of our sorrow'.[20]

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[17]Quoted in Tawney, *ibid.*, p. 206.
[18]Samuel Pepys, *Diary*, July 29, 1667.
[19]*Ibid.*, July 7 and 21, 1666.
[20]*Ibid.*, June 10, 1666.

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There seems little doubt that the effective centre of society had shifted to the mercantile and banking middle class, to the great urban centre of London, and concomitantly, to the Puritans. Pepys, a representative bourgeois would-be gentleman, closer to the Court than most, would have been only too glad for signs of stability and success in the restored monarchy. But, while not a profound man, he had a keen realistic sense for the direction of the wind, and when he makes his second reference in the Diary to a performance of *Bartholomew Fair*, just seven years after the first, already quoted, he says:

> 'And it is an excellent play; the more I see it, the more I love the wit of it; only the business of abusing the Puritans begins to grow stale, and of no use, they being the people that, at last, will be found the wisest'.[21]

So, from the Hectique period of transition characterized by an abstract attempt to bring spirit and body together when they were rapidly pulling apart (if there is any one single term to indicate the subject of all of Donne's work, it would be 'relationship', by definition an abstract entity), we are now brought by the successful combination of Puritan with business man, to a solidly material world of goods and substance—solid except for its tendency to lose its body in finance and statistics. But as for what had been called the spirit, it was cleanly split off, and there was now no longer a fevered attempt, as in the 'metaphysicals', to pull it back. Tawney says:

> 'In emphasizing that God's Kingdom is not of this world, Puritanism did not always escape from the suggestion that this world is no part of God's Kingdom. The complacent victim of that false antithesis between the social mechanism and the life of the spirit, which was to tyrannize over English religious thought for the next two centuries, it enthroned religion in the privacy of the individual soul, not without some sighs of sober satisfaction at its abdication from society'.[22]

The complacency of this position, and of what obviously should have been the uneasiest of mergers, that of spiritual concern and material interest, depended on these two realms being kept strictly separate. This was easily supported—the separation had been made by Luther, and was from the start central to Protestantism. It also depended on the condition that activity in the first or earthly realm did not run counter to but rather paralleled the career of the soul in the non-material world beyond life. To run counter to it could hardly be justified, or complacently engaged in; though one should never *identify* earthly gains with spiritual ones, their pursuit must be made consonant with spiritual ambition, so that 'in winning the world, he wins the salvation of his own soul as well',[23] for

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[21] *Ibid.*, September 4, 1668.
[22] Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, p. 254.
[23] *Ibid.*, p. 249.

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otherwise the merger of religious and secular movements could not be supported. And the merger was most practically necessary, otherwise the old order could not be destroyed—a revolution could not be successful without plenty of money behind it, both during and afterwards; nor, of course, can a great deal of money pile up in a non-controlling social bracket without a revolution of some description. So the case was resolved, through the Puritan doctrine of 'works', and the concept of 'the calling', If one's earthly enterprises were blessed with success, this was heartening evidence that in the other world of one's real—that is, spiritual—life, one was beatifically situated. The two worlds remain quite separate—there is no casual relationship between them, but they merely run parallel, the one shadowing forth the other. Thus the Puritan merchant's prosperous progress in the world of money and goods was viewed as encouraging evidence of salvation in the world of the spirit to come, and toward which he made his precarious pilgrimage, on which, at any time, a sudden collapse of his business enterprises might afford sickening proof that he might be among the damned after all. There was, then, really a compulsion to succeed, on the purely theological grounds of contentment over the state of one's spirit or soul. 'Distress', says Tawney, 'was a proof of demerit', and the Poor Laws were shocking. And with this reconciliation of the disparate realms of spirit and matter, the struggle to 'unify' them which we have seen in Donne and his associates perforce ceases entirely, since it is quite out of place. The two realms, being thus parallel, may exist together in placid separation, while the individual may pursue his earthly career in the terms of this world with confidence that its aims do no violence to his eternal life after death. (It must be stressed that his success on earth does not *create* his soul's salvation, but only *proves* it to him and all others, as a mirror reflects evidence of a beautiful face—the two realms remaining *causally unconnected*.) So one's proper course in regard to the activities in this world was no more, as in Donne's statement, 'to be none of it', but on the contrary, to live in its material terms as prosperously as possible.

If we take this as being a just picture, in simplified form, of the Puritan-bourgeois philosophy prevailing at the Restoration, we might briefly summarize the position in relation to our central themes: (1) the schism of abstract and material, thought and sense, and (2) the idea of order. As to the first, it would show our two realms now cleanly divided, and no struggle even justifiable in the interest of bringing them back into a single identification. And corollary to this is the injunction to live complacently but progressively in the purely material world—we have come from the abstract 'relationship' preoccupations of the Metaphysicals to a comfortable, but confident, even jubilant, materialism. But the material world which we now occupy is no longer the one which we lived in also confidently in the agrarian days of the early Elizabethans and the preceding—confidently then because the world of the spirit was felt to be part and parcel of the natural structure.

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Instead it is a material world, urban and mercantile, from which the spirit has been sundered and removed. As to the second theme, we find the idea of order has, as effectively as the world of the spirit, been removed from the physical world of the society which once typified it—the static hierarchic 'social organism' which we have described as existing under monarchic agrarianism. The new society is just the contrary—dynamic, and based on acceptance of flux and progress, so any idea of order, proportion of parts, or fixed structure must exist abstractly apart from it. Such an idea must exist in some way, however, if not as part of society then as part of something else, since it fills a fundamental human need, and seems essential to the integration of the personality, as well as providing the element of form in art—as Donne called it, 'beauties best, proportion'. So now we find it: (a) being looked for outside of society, in the part of the natural world not related to human organizations or the man-made body politic; or, (b) being artificially created in architecture, literature, drama, and even manners. Much of this activity can be grouped under a single term which leaps into prominence at this time—the word 'decorum'. This forms the subject of the next chapter. However, the general attention given to the discovery and creation of ideas of order during the Restoration period has all the vehemence of protestation which usually betrays a great need.

HAROLD WENDELL SMITH.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Sirs,

I read with much interest Mr. Harold Wendell Smith's article on *'Reason' and the Restoration Ethos* in the last number of *Scrutiny*, but from the point of view of a historian I found one or two things in the latter part of the article rather disturbing. There seemed to be over-much reliance on a single work, Tawney's *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (1926): this book is generally recognized to be both brilliant and stimulating, but it has its place in a lengthy historical controversy. It has been subjected to some criticisms, and Professor Tawney himself in the Preface to the 1936 edition has made some qualifications of his own as well as of Weber's arguments. Equally, following up Professor Tawney's book, there has been a good deal of detailed research on the period of the Interregnum, of which Miss M. James's *Social Problems and Policy during the Puritan Revolution* (1930) is perhaps the most comprehensive.

I think that Mr. Smith's article shows a too easy acceptance of the equation of 'Puritan' and 'bourgeois', in such phrases as 'the fundamentally bourgeois character of Puritanism' and 'the commercial orientation of Puritanism runs through the whole canon of faith and ethics sanctifying the economic virtues'. Certainly the early seventeenth century, the period of the rise to power of Puritanism, saw changes in the social structure, connected largely with the price-rise—'the rise of the gentry', the diminution of the Crown lands, and the indebtedness of some of the aristocracy (though the dangers of over-estimating this have been pointed out by Mr. Trevor Roper in an article in the *Economic History Review* 2nd Series, Vol. III, No. 3, criticizing Mr. Stone's conclusions radically). Equally, there were elements in Puritan thinking on social questions during the Interregnum which encouraged business enterprise—for instance, the greater harshness to poverty, which Miss James noted in government policy and in some, though not all of the pamphlets. But there are complexities which seem to be overlooked by Mr. Smith. What may be called the 'commercial interpretation' of the Puritan doctrine of the 'calling' was criticized by H. M. Robertson in *Aspects of the Rise of Economic Individualism* (1935). By a comparison of three Puritan manuals of conduct—of 1657, 1673, and the early eighteenth century, he argued that the doctrine only gradually developed from an antidote against covetous ambition to a comfortable doctrine suitable for a commercial people, and that this happened mainly after the Restoration. In his 1936 preface Professor Tawney declared that too much had been made of this doctrine, and that Weber, in treating of Calvinist social theory took 'a good deal of his evidence from a somewhat late phase in the history of the movement' and 'did not emphasize sufficiently the profound changes through which Calvinism passed in the century following the death of Calvin'. The article overlooks, too, the tradi-

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tional elements in Puritan social thought, particularly the constant criticism of covetousness and dishonesty in business, and also those revolutionary elements of left-wing Puritanism which were by no means 'bourgeois', but were alike disturbing to Royalists, Presbyterians, and to Independents like Cromwell and Ireton. (The divergencies within Puritanism on social policy were remarked by Professor Tawney in a note at the end of his book, summarizing his own criticisms of Weber.) I think that Mr. Smith should not rely too much on 'the fundamentally bourgeois' character of Puritanism, but rather consider the total effect of the 'Puritan Revolution', which is not quite the same thing. Although the original impetus lay with Puritanism, it was the combination of circumstances—the Civil War, the breakdown of the central organs of government and of their control in the localities, and the enormous activity of the land market with the sales of royal, episcopal and Cavalier lands—which above all disturbed the social order. It has been said that it was the business man and not the Puritan who triumphed at the Restoration.

Finally there seems to be a perhaps unconscious, but again too easy sliding from the pre-Restoration Puritanism attacked by Sprat, etc., to the South Sea Bubble. Certainly Non-conformity played a large part in building up the financial and industrial world of the eighteenth century, but it was Non-conformity in a political, social and intellectual environment different from that of the early seventeenth century, an environment which included among its interacting elements not only Puritanism but also the scientific movement of the Royal Society, Political Arithmetic, the growth of religious toleration and the development of banking. Many of the great industrialists, and some, though by no means all the financiers sprang from the Non-conformists who had been expelled from the Church and were virtually excluded by the Clarendon Code from careers in government offices and civil and military professions. In such conditions the Non-conformists became more exclusively an urban middle-class community than they had been before (see E. D. Bebb *Nonconformity and Social and Economic Life 1660-1800* (1935)).

Perhaps the main cause of these over-simplifications is that in his concern to explain and justify the ideas of Restoration Royalists on Puritanism's contribution to social disturbance, Mr. Smith has not sufficiently placed their ideas by any detached assessment of all the causes of that disturbance.

MARJORIE COX.

Dear Sir,

It is unfortunate that Harold Wendell Smith's interesting and suggestive article on *Reason and the Restoration Ethos* is vitiated by a very unsatisfactory treatment of Rochester, which seems to be due to inadequate knowledge of his work and of the findings of recent scholarship. He rakes up the old story that Rochester was responsible for the beating up of Dryden in Rose Alley on 18th December, 1679, and is apparently unaware that Professor J. H.

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Wilson in his article on the subject in the *Review of English Studies*, Vol. XV, July 1939, and his edition of the *Rochester-Savile Letters* (Columbus, Ohio, 1941) has shown that this piece of gossip rests on no substantial evidence and that it is unlikely that Rochester had anything to do with the Rose Alley outrage. Mr. Smith's attempt to show that Rochester was a defender of the Stuart *régime* against 'Revolution' would, I believe, have provoked the Earl's sardonic laughter. One of Rochester's most popular poems was *The History of Insipids*, the most devastating of all the satires on the restored monarchy, ending with a direct incitement to revolutionary action:

> Cringe, scrape, no more ye City Fopps,
> Leave off your Feasting and fine speeches,
> Beat up your Drums, shut up your Shops,
> The Courtiers then will kiss your Breeches.
> Arm'd tell the Popish Duke that Rules,
> You'r Free-born Subjects, not *French* Mules.

There is also evidence that Rochester was a friend of Andrew Marvell, Dryden's enemy and the chief propagandist of Shaftesbury's opposition party. In his poem *Tunbridge Wells*, Rochester praises Marvell by name for 'exposing the Folly' of Samuel Parker, the High Church divine who had 'trampled on Religious Liberty'.

Mr. Smith's article shows the dangers of a crude application of theories of the class war to a period when many of the conflicts cut across class divisions. Rochester is actually a prototype of the revolutionary *déclassé* nobleman like Mirabeau and Byron, while Dryden represents the conservative middle class which feared and detested revolutionary change and allied itself with the Court.

V. DE S. PINTO.

Editorial Note: It should be said that Mr. Smith, who has not been accessible for consultation, left behind him in quitting this country the unrevised first draft of a book, from which, on being requested, he most generously gave the Editors permission to extract portions for publication. We know he will welcome these letters (which he has not seen), since he gave his permission with a view to forwarding discussion of the very complex issues with which he deals. The *actualité* of those issues is apparent in the essay by him to be found in the present number—an essay that will be seen to relate interestingly to Mrs. Cox's criticism.

Dear Sirs,

As one trudges through the syllabus of the Oxford English School, it is a welcome relief to read Mr. Speirs' articles revaluing Middle English literature. This applies especially to his current article on the Mystery Plays; there one is not pulled up by asides levelled at 'scholars'. It is unfortunate, however, that Mr. Speirs began his series by laying himself open to attack from the scholars.

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Not that this is a new habit of his. The *Times Literary Supplement* of the 9th March, 1951 contained a review of *Chaucer the Maker* which was mainly devoted to showing up 'lack of scholarship'. The accusation was just; but the point I want to make is that the reviewer was given the opportunity entirely to ignore the important elements of Mr. Speirs' book, such as, for example, his suggestion that Chaucer inaugurated the Great Tradition of the English novel.

In the essay on *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Mr. Speirs' remarks in a footnote: 'To suppose as a matter of course or probability that because these poems appear in the same MS. and dialect they are—on these grounds alone—by the same author is quite uncritical. Yet that is what the scholars who make a property of Middle English literature—detaching it from the rest of English literature for the purpose—do not hesitate to do'. (*Scrutiny* XVI, p. 275). But now let us see what Messrs. Tolkien and Gordon actually say in the edition which Mr. Speirs very properly despises: '*Sir Gawain* is closely related in language and style to the other three poems in the same manuscript. As has been noted (p. xvii), there are descriptive passages of some length in *Sir Gawain* and *Purity* of striking similarity, containing whole lines that are almost identical. *Sir Gawain* is most closely connected with *Purity*, but there are many links with the other two poems also. It is usually assumed from the unity of dialect, the numerous verbal and stylistic parallels found in these poems, and from their being copied together in one manuscript, that they are all by one author. The arguments are not conclusive, but the assumption withstands all tests so well that most *of those who have worked over the poems in detail have been convinced that they are all by one author*'. (pp. xvii-xviii). There doesn't seem much justification for Mr. Speirs' remark there; and in addition he does not provide the evidence to refute the assumption.

Another example is Mr. Speirs' comment that 'one of the curiosities of Tolkien and Gordon's introduction is a diagram in which letters of the alphabet represent French originals that do not exist but are assumed to have existed' (p. 276). I am reminded of the fact that in 1875 Sievers argued on internal evidence that the *Genesis B* section of the Junius manuscript was not original Anglo-Saxon, but had been translated from an Old Saxon original; twenty years later the Old Saxon manuscript which Sievers had asserted must exist was found, albeit fragmentarily, in the Vatican library. One can imagine the sort of remark that Mr. Speirs might have made on Sievers' arguments had the two been contemporaries. Mr. Speirs does not produce any evidence to show that the hypothetical romances never existed; he merely says that 'the particular French romances which are not there for *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* to be derived from are light-heartedly assumed to have been there and to have been lost'. (p. 276). The assumption is not at all 'light-hearted' in fact.

Mr. Speirs' attitude towards scholarship not only gives the academics the very openings they want through which to attack his

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attempts seriously to revalue Middle English literature. It also leads him to the reckless assumption—I am tempted to use his own adjective of light-hearted—that Middle English is easy to read. Even Chaucer is not really so easy as all that; and I doubt if anyone without some training in Middle English can read a 'straight text' of *Sir Gawain* and get anything much out of it, even if the 'spelling of the quotations has been straightened out only in a few obvious respects'. (*Scrutiny* XVI, p. 300). It is imperative to gloss the obscure words—there is about one in each line of *Sir Gawain*—if the modern reader is to follow the sense at all adequately. The whole question of spelling is one which needs to be considered very carefully, but discussion of this would lead me too far off my main subject.

In sum, I want to make it clear that I consider that Mr. Speirs is doing pioneer work of the greatest value, but his contempt for scholarship goes too far. The scholar who sneers at the critic's lack of scholarship is justified so long as he does not imply that the criticism is necessarily therefore bad; similarly, the critic is justified at sneering at the scholar's critical ineptitude so long as he does not imply that scholarship doesn't matter. Mr. Speirs overdoes it, and the result is that the value of his work is sometimes lost, for the non-critical scholar, anxious to preserve Middle English as his own, is enabled to dismiss the whole of Mr. Speirs' work as valueless. The solution, surely, is not difficult; nothing is simpler than to get one's scholarship right with a little co-operation. And does not good criticism imply good scholarship? One of the reasons why Mr. Bateson's *Essays in Criticism* does not suffer from the nastier kind of academic criticism is that its scholarship is impeccable; as the first issue put it, 'there must not be the "howlers" and the unawareness of what is already in print displayed by too many critics and reviewers to-day'. Cannot Mr. Speirs' revaluations be equally impeccable?

JOHN GILLARD WATSON.

Mr. Speirs replies:

The first remark quoted from me did not refer particularly to Tolkien and Gordon's view. However it is a view they partially endorse. My answer is as follows:

(1) The fact that four poems are in the same dialect does not prove that they are by the same author. (2) Nor does the fact that they have been copied by the same hand on the same MS. These arguments for identity of authorship are, therefore, not merely 'not conclusive'; they are not arguments. One might as well solemnly argue that four poems in the Greek anthology might be by the same author because they are in Greek and have been preserved together. (3) 'Verbal and stylistic parallels' etc.—any school of poets sharing the language and poetic idiom, as well as themes and conventions, of an age and place will have so much in common that their resemblances to, and their echoes of, each other will be a pronounced

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feature of their work as a body. One might as well contend that the Ballads or the Elizabethan plays or the poems of the Metaphysicals—were composed by a single author. It is by his personal idiom that each poet will be identifiable. Identical passages surely suggest the opposite of a common authorship of the poems in which they occur. Finally, Sisson—and I suppose Mr. Watson admits him among the scholars—says of these arguments for a common authorship: 'though good they are not conclusive'.

As for the concluding phrase quoted from Tolkien and Gordon, 'those who have worked over the poems in detail have been convinced that they are all by one author'—one can only add two exclamation marks. No comparative analysis of the four poems has in fact ever been offered, and only such an analysis could establish any such assumption. I might equally well affirm that privately I have reasons for thinking (as I think I have) that *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Pearl* and the two 'scriptural' poems imply three totally distinct artistic personalities. But there would be no reason for anyone to accept such an assumption from me until I had taken the trouble to establish it publicly by a comparative examination of the texts. On the other hand, the onus is not on me to refute someone else's assumption for which no reasons have in fact been offered. I merely indicated that that assumption was in fact based on no produced evidence. On this baseless assumption more than one scholar has in his turn laboriously based a re-construction of the life-history of the 'Gawain poet' from the four poems.

So also, if a particular French romance (or romances) is to be assumed to have existed, in order to provide an original for *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* to have been derived or translated from, the reasons that would have to be given for such an assumption would have to be based on an analysis of the poem itself. No such analysis has been produced. The word I should have used was not 'light-hearted' but 'irresponsible'. Again, why put on me the onus to produce evidence either for or against someone else's assumption? Of course, I never affirmed that a French ancestor (or ancestors) of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* may not have existed. But is it so very material? The poem may also have had Norse ancestors and Celtic ancestors. My point was that students should not have to expend effort on memorising a conjectural pedigree instead of concentrating on the poem we do have. The poet, of course, has had his sources—as I hope my account of the poem sufficiently showed. He has had a body of Norse and of Celtic myth and ritual, and, in addition to his own specific tradition of alliterative poetry, he could draw on the tradition of chivalrous and courtly poetry embodied in the French romances. But he has used his sources as Shakespeare used his, for a new and profound purpose, as a great original artist. The poem does not specially look as though it was made by a poet who sat down with an MS. of a French romance in front of him which he then proceeded to translate in writing into English alliterative verse. This great poet has obviously handled

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his various sources and materials with the largest freedom, with Shakespearean creativeness. Incidentally, some lines near the beginning of the poem appear explicitly to refer to oral tradition—not merely to written tradition—and to live recital.

> I schal telle hit astit, as I in toun herde, with tonge,
> As hit is stad and stoken
> In stori stif and stronge,
> With lel letteres loken,
> In londe so hatz ben longe.

'I shall recite it, as I heard it', he says, not 'as I read it'. On looking up Tolkien and Gordon's glossary I note that 'stad' is explained as 'put down (in writing)' and 'stoken' as 'set down (in writing)'. It is true that 'in writing' is bracketed. But I can see no reason at all for the implication. All that the phrase 'stad and stoken' may legitimately be taken to mean is 'as it has been put together or composed'. Nor would the 'letteres' of two lines later necessarily mean written or visible letters rather than audible letters.

I do not think I have assumed that it is easy to acquire a working knowledge of Middle English. I have at least not assumed that Middle English poetry is easy to read. I have been concerned to show that it is often more subtle and complex than has generally been assumed and that the *essential* difficulty with it is the difficulty there always is in responding to poetry. I have insisted on the necessity for concentrating on the thing itself. By 'training in Middle English' has often, however, been meant some special philological training. We have to acquire a working knowledge of French—far more troublesome than to acquire a working knowledge of Middle English—in order to read the classics of French literature. Yet we are not considered incapable of reading or interpreting these (or reprehensible for trying to do so) if we are not primarily philological specialists. It was not, however, the philologists I had in mind in my references to 'scholars'.

It has been out of courtesy that I have used the word 'scholars of those whom Mr. Watson calls the 'non-critical scholars'—why not call them simply 'un-critical'?—and perhaps I have caused some confusion by doing so. For are 'non-critical' or 'un-critical scholars'—in relation to the art of literature—properly to be called scholars? I could not hope that my essays would be of any use to the uncritical even when styled 'scholars'.

Of course, if one attempts to do anything at all one will make mistakes. To be preoccupied with making oneself impeccable seems to me the way of egotism and likely to end in the limbo of complete negativeness. But to accuse me—in the circumstances—of 'lack of scholarship' is either to make another unestablished assumption or it is downright impudence. The anonymous *Times Literary Supplement* reviewer produced—with the interestedness in discrediting the book which was to be expected of a good member of his Trade Union or Club of Chaucerians on the defensive—an *appearance* of exposing my 'lack of scholarship' by mentioning things he said that I had

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not mentioned in connection with Chaucer's Prioress. The appearance is, of course, all that is required by journalism. But I clearly enough *implied* in my account of the Prioress all the things he mentioned. There was in fact nothing he mentioned that I did not know already, that I have not seen repeated to boredom, and, indeed, is not a matter of commonplace. Criticism of poetry is not (or should not be) a distracting parade of information. It should *imply* the relevant knowledge—knowledge both of literature and of life. Anything else is ill-breeding and worse; it can act as a positive obstruction between the poem and the reader. There is, of course, no end to the acquisition of 'background' and there are those who find it less exacting to spend their time on *that* than on the poetry—the thing itself. Such 'background' knowledge is also more examinable.

One cannot, indeed, help having some sympathy with one's students—the students of English for whom 'Middle English' has so long been the most depressing part of the university syllabus. Dullness is not, I am sure, inherent in medieval English literature itself. It must, therefore, arise from the way in which it has been treated. The responsibility for that must surely be placed on the 'non-critical scholars' in whose keeping it has been. Their 'non-critical scholarship' has diffused in effect a dismal fog in which the thing itself—the poetry itself—has been virtually lost sight of and must be groped for. This 'non-critical scholarship' amounts to nothing—when it is analysed—more substantial than fog. How much of it is real knowledge? How much of it is not mere accumulation and repetition of unsubstantiated opinions that impede and clog anyone trying to do a little real work and exercise his judgment? The baseless assumptions accumulated by 'non-critical scholarship' are by now, however, long 'established' not as blunders but as dogma to be subscribed to by students who wish to pass their examinations. So when I attempt to do a little elementary criticism of the poetry itself—without dutifully invoking the assistance or 'collaboration' of the fog—my criticism looks like blundering to those for whom the established blunders or baseless assumptions are orthodoxy.

As for the 'impeccable' of Mr. Watson's concluding sentences, he must permit me to say that it strikes me as naïve in its uncritical docility. And surely Mr. Watson can think of other reasons for immunity from 'the nastier kinds of academic criticism'?

P.S. I believe the point about the *Genesis B*—though here I am speaking without the book and subject to correction—is that it is full of Old Saxon words. It might have seemed probable enough, therefore, that it had an Old Saxon original, and this proved to be so. It was a simple case, perhaps. Actually an argument from vocabulary by itself need not be conclusive. From the vocabulary of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* we might equally well argue for an Old Norse original as for a French original.

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THE NOVEL AS DRAMATIC POEM (VII):

'THE RAINBOW' (I)

THE RAINBOW and *Women in Love* can be seen clearly enough to have emerged, by separation, out of what had been for Lawrence, at the outset, one; a single novel, if, in its pioneering audacity, a very complex one—the new and major thing proposed for achievement after *Sons and Lovers*. In the early references to *The Sisters*, the 'work in progress' that we begin to hear of in 1913, it is impossible not to see (along with whatever else) the shaping *Women in Love*. But by 1915 *The Sisters* (or *The Wedding Ring*) has become *The Rainbow*—it was published in September of that year. Lawrence, in 1916, speaks of *Women in Love* as a 'kind of sequel to *The Rainbow*'. Actually, the relation between the two novels is quite other than 'sequel' would ordinarily convey.

Women in Love is wholly self-contained, and, for all the carry-over of names of characters, has no organic connexion with *The Rainbow*. And, in a radical way, in fact, it refuses to be seen as establishing any continuity with the earlier-published novel: it represents, so decisively, a different phase of Lawrence's art. And, intimately related in conception and gestation as we can see the two books to have been, the order of publication puts them in their right places. *The Rainbow* is essentially a younger work, anterior in experience to *Women in Love*. Going back from *Women in Love* to *The Rainbow*, we can see that the later-published work, though not a sequel, does truly 'come after' and has *this* behind it: we can watch, in the patently younger work, Lawrence arriving at the themes and preoccupations and distinctive approaches to life of *Women in Love*.

But we have at the same time to recognize that 'anterior in experience' might suggest something too simple. Genius in Lawrence manifests itself in an astonishing richness and rapidity of development. Putting *Sons and Lovers* behind him even before the publishers have brought it out, he can tell Edward Garnett that he has 'written more than half' of a new book:

> 'But no one will dare to publish it. I feel I could knock my head against the wall. Yet I love and adore this new book. It's all crude as yet . . . but I think it's great—so new, so really a stratum deeper than I think anybody has ever gone in a novel. But there, you see, it's my latest. Its all analytical—quite unlike *Sons and Lovers*, not a bit visualized'.

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We cannot but read this as pointing to *Women in Love*. That novel, if not 'all analytical' in being 'not a bit visualized', *is* 'all analytical' in that, though strongly dramatic, it everywhere renders, in the whole organization, in the part, and in all the subtleties of the method of presentment, a profound and comprehensive analysis of the kind indicated in the passages of the letters in which Lawrence explains the aim that is to characterize *The Sisters*. On the other hand, comparison with the later novel being in question, we may fairly distinguish *The Rainbow* by saying that it is notably less analytic. That is one of the differences that make it seem younger than *Women in Love*.

Another is that we don't find registered in it in any obvious way that experience of the advanced and sophisticated intellectual world—Chelsea, Garsington Manor, and the milieux where Lawrence associated with Russell—which figures so much in the letters contemporary with *The Sisters*, which played its part (we can see) in the striking development represented by the conception and rapid growth of that 'work in progress', and which has its clear manifestation in *Women in Love*. The fact is that the marvellous expansion of life and creativeness in the Lawrence of those years (we learn that he was also writing *The Lost Girl*) means a great complexity; we take note of phases of development, and 'phase' implies succession, but the contemplation of Lawrence's developing genius brings home to us how much it is in the nature of such complexity to entail 'anticipations' and concurrences. We may perhaps fairly judge that it is the Lawrence of *Women in Love* who determines the concluding of *The Rainbow*—its separating-off as the first published outcome of the 'work in progress'. By 1915 Lawrence, it seems reasonable to judge, was already predominantly the Lawrence of the later novel, though still sufficiently of the 'younger' one to be able to finish it. Or perhaps it is better to make the point by noting that, in an important sense, *The Rainbow* is not a finished work.

Lawrence's calling *Women in Love* a 'sequel' conveys his awareness that *The Rainbow* seemed to need one—or rather, that the final pause to which he had brought it was not an end but a cessation. The positive note on which the last chapter of the novel closes is significant; it has the effect of an arbitrary formal 'Finis', betraying in its declaratory emphasis the author's sense of an absence he cannot properly fill. The note is one that, in the phase of *Women in Love*, it would have been impossible for him to take up, and we suspect that, even while he was supplying it, he knew that he could not fulfil the promise in it. But that is a point to return to.

The Rainbow, then, is not a perfect work of art. I used to think *Women in Love* decidedly the less successful of the two novels. I now think *The Rainbow* that; but it nevertheless seems to me very much more successful than it once did. However much or little we judge it to fall short of complete success, it is certainly, and unmistakably (it seems to me now), a major work of a great

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writer. And it is unique. In spite of what I may have appeared to suggest, the methods and techniques are not those of *Women in Love* at a more rudimentary stage of development; they are different—different from those both of *Women in Love* and of *Sons and Lovers*. The creative impulsions and the determining interests are different.

How different *The Rainbow* is from *Women in Love* we may fairly convey by observing that there is much about *The Rainbow* that makes us see it as being, clearly and substantially, in a line from George Eliot; as belonging to the same tradition of art—and of more than 'art' immediately suggests. That there are, of course, the profoundest unlikenesses between the two great novelists even where they come closest can be very forcibly illustrated from the opening of the first chapter, in which Lawrence evokes, in a way at once so reminiscent and so original, the traditional country life that centres in the Midlands farm. This passage begins on the first page (that it is well-known makes it the fitter for the illustrative purpose):

> 'So the Brangwens came and went without fear of necessity, working hard because of the life that was in them, not for want of the money. Neither were they thriftless. They were aware of the last halfpenny, and instinct made them not waste the peeling of their apple, for it would help to feed the cattle. But heaven and earth was teeming around them, and how should this cease? They felt the rush of the sap in spring, they knew the wave which cannot halt, but every year throws forward the seed to begetting, and, falling back leaves the young-born on the earth. They knew the intercourse between heaven and earth, sunshine drawn into the breast and bowels, the rain sucked up in the day-time, nakedness that comes under the wind in autumn, showing the birds' nests no longer worth hiding. Their life and inter-relations were such; feeling the pulse and body of the soil, that opened to their furrow for the grain, and became smooth and supple after their ploughing, and clung to their feet with a weight that pulled like desire, lying hard and unresponsive when the crops were to be shorn away. The young corn waved and was silken, and the lustre slid along the limbs of the men who saw it. They took the udder of the cows, the cows yielded milk and pulse against the hands of the men, the pulse of the blood of the teats of the cows beat into the pulse of the hands of the men. They mounted their horses, and held life between the grip of their knees, they harnessed their horses at the wagon, and, with hand on the bridle-rings, drew the heaving of the horses after their will.
>
> In autumn the partridges whirred up, birds in flocks blew like spray across the fallow, rooks appeared on the grey, watery heavens, and flew cawing into the winter. Then the men sat by the fire in the house where the women moved about with surety, and the limbs and the body of the men were impregnated

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with the day, cattle and earth and vegetation and the sky, the men sat by the fire and their brains were inert, as their blood flowed heavy with the accumulation from the living day'.

It is not merely that George Eliot doesn't write this kind of prose. Lawrence is not indulging in descriptive 'lyricism', or writing poetically in order to generate atmosphere. Words here are used in the way, not of eloquence, but of creative poetry (a wholly different way, that is, from that of *O may I join the choir invisible*): they establish as an actual presence—create as part of the substance of the book—something that is essential to Lawrence's theme. The kind of intense apprehension of the unity of life that they evidence is as decidedly not in George Eliot's genius as it is *of* Lawrence's. It goes with his ability to talk about—to evoke—'blood-intimacy' and 'blood-togetherness'. It belongs, in short, to that aspect of his genius which has made him in general repute (however absurdly) the prophet of the Dark Gods—the partisan of instinct against intelligence, the humane and the civilized.

The very theme of *The Rainbow*—the essential creative interest and the informing conception—confutes that fallacy. The quoted passage, so far from portending any Nazi-like doctrine of *Blut und Boden* has a directly opposed significance. The life of 'blood-intimacy' that it plays its part in creating is, in the novel, a necessary and potent presence as something to be transcended. The novel has for theme the urgency, and the difficult struggle, of the higher human possibilities to realize themselves—and no one who has read *The Rainbow* could call in question the legitimacy here of my 'higher'. Immediately on what I have quoted above follows this:

> 'The women were different. On them too was the drowse of blood-intimacy, calves sucking and hens running together in droves, and young geese palpitating in the hands while the food was pushed down their throttle. But the women looked out from the heated, blind intercourse of farm-life, to the spoken world beyond. They were aware of the lips and the mind of the world speaking and giving utterance, they heard the sound in the distance, and they strained to listen.
>
> It was enough for the men, that the earth heaved and opened its furrow to them, that the wind blew to dry the wet wheat, and set the young ears of corn wheeling freshly round about; it was enough that they helped the cow in labour, or ferreted the rats from under the barn, or broke the back of a rabbit with a sharp knock of the hand. So much warmth and generating and pain and death did they know in their blood, earth and sky and beast and green plants, so much exchange and interchange they had with these, that they lived full and surcharged, their senses full fed, their faces always turned to the heat of the blood, staring into the sun, dazed with looking towards the source of generation, unable to turn round.
>
> But the woman wanted another form of life than this, something that was not blood-intimacy. Her house faced out from the

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farm-buildings and fields, looked out to the road and the village with church and Hall and the world beyond. She stood to see the far-off world of cities and governments and the active scope of man, the magic land to her, where secrets were made known and desires fulfilled. She faced outwards to where men moved dominant and creative, having turned their back on the pulsing heat of creation, and with this behind them, were set out to discover what was beyond, to enlarge their own scope and range and freedom; whereas the Brangwen men faced inwards to the teeming life of creation, which poured unresolved into their veins.

Looking out, as she must, from the front of her house towards the activity of man in the world at large, whilst her husband looked out to the back at sky and harvest and beast and land, she strained her eyes to see what man had done in fighting outwards to knowledge, she strained to hear how he uttered himself in his conquest, her deepest desire hung on the battle that she heard, far off, being waged on the edge of the unknown. She also wanted to know, and to be of the fighting host.

. . . What was it in the vicar, that raised him above the common men as man is raised above the beast? She craved to know. She craved to achieve this higher being, if not in herself, then in her children. That which makes a man strong even if he be little and frail in body, just as any man is little and frail beside a bull, and yet stronger than the bull, what was it? It was not money nor power nor position. What power had the vicar over Tom Brangwen—none. Yet strip them and set them on a desert island, and the vicar was the master. His soul was the master of the other man's. And why—why? She decided it was a question of knowledge.

. . . Why were her own children marked below those others? Why should the curate's children inevitably take precedence over her children, why should dominance be given them from the start? It was not money, nor even class. It was education and experience, she decided.

It was this, this education, this higher form of being, that the mother wished to give to her children, so that they too could live the supreme life on earth. For her children, at least, the children of her heart, had the complete nature that should take place in equality with the living, vital people in the land, not be left behind obscure and stifled among the labourers. Why must they remain obscured and stifled all their lives, why should they suffer from lack of freedom to move? How should they learn the entry into the finer, more vivid circle of life?'

The mother's aspiration for her children is of its very nature indeterminate. What meaning it can take on by way of vindicating itself, what values may give it a meaning, will be discovered and created in the living—in the actual life of the individual. But the individual is both a child and a parent: the effort of realization and discovery starts again in each generation—is carried on by starting

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again (Lawrence feels with peculiar force this paradox of a continuity that is at the same time discontinuity); and it is an essential part of the undertaking of *The Rainbow* to deal with three generations. Here we have a major difference between the two novels that issued out of *The Sisters*. *The Rainbow* has not the inclusiveness of scope that, in the presentment of contemporary civilization, goes with profundity of treatment in *Women in Love*; but it has instead a depth of recession, a range, in time that distinguishes it.

To make this comparison is to recognize that *The Rainbow* too is a study of contemporary civilization. Lawrence's kind of insight and intelligence entailed such a scope when he proposed a deep and sustained study of related individual lives—entailed it the more because of the advantage of his birth and upbringing in that Midland region where, as the opening chapter with its *mise-en-scène* conveys to us, the immemorial farm-life ('We've been here above *two* hundred years') and the England represented by the canal, the colliery, the colliery-town and the advancing railway met one another and consorted in a challenging paradigm.

That the intuition of the oneness of life conveyed with such power at the beginning of *The Rainbow* is characteristic of Lawrence's genius doesn't need emphasizing; it is a commonplace. What perhaps may still be attested with some insistence is the other aspect of the given truth: the intensity of that intuition expresses itself in an intensity of preoccupation with the individual. Lawrence's genius was pre-eminently that of a novelist. No one could have been more profoundly possessed by the perception that life is a matter of individual lives, and that except in individual lives there is no life to be interested in or reverent about, and no life to be served. No one could have been more incapable than he in any mood of finding any felicity of meaning in 'the greatest good of the greatest number' (a phrase significantly associated with the failure in Anton Skrebensky). His sense of that truth which in *Women in Love* he emphasizes with the word 'disquality' makes itself felt everywhere in his work as a kind of steady religious passion.

The oneness of life; the separateness and irreducible otherness of lives; the supreme importance of 'fulfilment' in the individual, because here (if not here, nowhere) is life—the peculiar Laurentian genius manifests itself in the intensity, constancy and fulness of the intuition. We are given, towards the close of *The Rainbow*, the focussing image (it is as nearly a statement as the nature of the preoccupation of the book permits) when Ursula Brangwen, at Nottingham University College, looks through the microscope during a period consecrated to her (and Lawrence's) favourite study, Botany:

> '. . . as she focussed the light on her field, and saw the plant-animal lying shadowy in a boundless light, she was fretting over a conversation she had had a few days ago with Dr. Frankstone, who was a woman doctor of physics in the college . . . .

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The conversation had ended on a note of uncertainty, indefinite, wistful. But the purpose, what was the purpose? Electricity had no soul, light and heat had no soul. Was she herself an impersonal force, or conjunction of forces, like one of these? She looked still at the unicellar shadow that lay within the field of light, under her microscope. It was alive. She saw it move—she saw the bright mist of its ciliar activity, she saw the gleam of its nucleus, as it slid across the plane of light. What then was its will? If it was a conjunction of forces, physical and chemical, what held these forces unified, and for what purpose were they unified?

For what purpose were the incalculable physical and chemical activities nodalized in this shadowy, moving speck under her microscope? What was the will which nodalized them and created the one thing she saw? What was its intention? To be itself? Was its purpose just mechanical and limited to itself?

It intended to be itself. But what self? Suddenly in her mind the world gleamed strangely, with an intense light, like the nucleus of the creature under the microscope. Suddenly she had passed away into an intensely-gleaming light of knowledge. She could not understand what it all was. She only knew that it was not limited mechanical energy, nor mere purpose of self-preservation and self-assertion. It was a consummation, a being infinite. Self was a oneness with the infinite. To be oneself was a supreme gleaming triumph of infinity'.

Ursula's vision or intuition doesn't by itself immediately suggest that intense interest in personal relations which in Lawrence it actually portends. The insistence on the individual, or 'fulfilment' in the individual, as the essential manifestation of life carries with it a corollary; one that points to the specific vocation of novelist (rather than, what is so often proposed to us as Lawrence's, the lyric poet's) more unmistakably: it is only by way of the most delicate and complex responsive relations with others that the individual can achieve fulfilment. This theme has its discursive exposition in the two treatises *Psycho-analysis and the Unconscious* and *Fantasia of the Unconscious*. In the novels it is explored dramatically with the marvellous technical inventiveness of a great artist. There, in the novels, the treatment of the theme has for a major part of its implicit moral this further insistence: except between 'fulfilled' individuals—individuals, that is, who are really themselves, recognizing their separateness or otherness, and accepting the responsibility of that—there can be no personal relations that are lasting and satisfactory.

The crucial relations, of course, are those between a man and a woman. And here, it will be said, we come to a matter in which the difference between Lawrence and George Eliot are great. That is true. But they are not so great as the widely accepted view of Lawrence would suggest. That becomes strikingly apparent when we consider the case of Tom Brangwen as it is given us in the early

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pages of *The Rainbow*. We can say that it is not merely because Tom Brangwen is a young man that George Eliot could not have dealt with the stresses of his sexual life as Lawrence does (though it is well to add at once that she has not in this matter the timidity often attributed to her). She would not have brought them insistently into full focus in this way, and she could not have achieved either this natural intimacy and directness, or this inwardness, of treatment. But Lawrence's essential attitude is very far from exhibiting the kind of unlikeness to hers that his reputation invites the reader to expect: the point may be made by saying that they are not only equally unlike Maupassant in their attitudes towards sex; they are unlike in the same way. So much is this so that when, a few sentences back, for want of a substitute, I used the phrase 'sexual life' I did so under protest: it sorts as ill with Lawrence's kind of interest in the relations between men and women as it does with George Eliot's. It suggests that fling of Tom's which, though in his after-judgment intrinsically insignificant, nevertheless became a landmark in his life because it left him knowing so finally that *this*—mere satisfaction of the sexual impulse—was not what he wanted, and could not, in fact, bring him satisfaction.

'He was tormented now', says Lawrence, as George Eliot certainly could not have done, 'with sex desire, his imagination reverted always to lustful scenes'. But

> 'the disillusion of his first carnal contact with women, strengthened by his innate desire to find in a woman the embodiment of all his inarticulate, powerful religious impulses, put a bit in his mouth. He had something to lose which he was afraid of losing, which he was not sure even of possessing. This first affair did not matter much: but the business of love was at the bottom of his soul, the most serious and terrifying of all to him'.

George Eliot herself could not have given us the intensities of Tom Brangwen's struggle to achieve a due relating of desire with the other needs that he could not in any long run, he found, consent to separate from it, but we can venture with some confidence that, if she could have read these pages of *The Rainbow*, she would have responded with a certain poignancy of understanding—if also, perhaps, with a certain enlightenment. For we recognize that in Tom Brangwen, here, Lawrence (though with so great an advantage in clairvoyance and freedom of presentment) is dealing, in terms of the life of a youth and young man, with Maggie Tulliver's problem. The point is worth making as a way of calling attention to an important truth: Lawrence belongs to the same ethical and religious tradition as George Eliot. I say 'calling attention' to it, because, though it seems obvious to me, it would appear not to be so to everyone. It has been taken as obvious, for instance, that Lawrence exemplifies 'the crippling effect upon a man of letters of not having been brought up in the environment of a living and central tradition'.

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That Lawrence was—for actually this way of putting it fits the case with a marked felicity—brought up in the environment of a living tradition *The Rainbow* offers the most compelling kind of evidence. The book might have been written to show what, in the concrete, a living tradition is, and what it is to be brought up in the environment of one. (As to whether the tradition qualifies as 'central' I will not argue; I am content with recording it to have been that in the environment of which George Eliot, too, was brought up.) We are made to see how, amid the pieties and continuities of life at the Marsh, the spiritual achievements of a mature civilization—the integrative sanctions, with the value-creating associations and forms that make possible the individual's attainment, above the level of mere response to basic instinct, of something rich and significant—are transmitted. We are shown how Tom Brangwen's problem has been created for him, the problem of satisfying desire in a less simple way than that of mere animal response to crude instinct; how, that is, he has become so different from a Norman peasant—or any character—of Maupassant (and so different, too, from any character of Wyndham Lewis):

> 'The thing was something of a shock to him. In the close intimacy of the farm kitchen, the woman occupied the supreme position. The men deferred to her in the house, on all household points, on all points of morality and behaviour. The woman was the symbol for that further life which comprised religion and love and morality. The men placed in her hands their own conscience, they said to her "Be my conscience-keeper, be the angel at the doorway guarding my outgoing and my incoming". And the woman fulfilled her trust, the men rested implicitly in her, receiving her praise or her blame with pleasure or with anger, rebelling and storming, but never for a moment really escaping in their own souls from her prerogative'.

But it is not the drift of *The Rainbow* to exalt this order of things—the order presented by the immemorial life at the Marsh and the 'close intimacy of the farm kitchen'—as finally adequate, the supreme fulfilment of life; the theme is rather the transcending of it. We watch the struggle towards self-responsibility in the individual—self-responsibility and a wider scope, things which entail a freer play of intelligence and a direct part in the intellectual culture and finer civilization of the age, the finer contemporary human consciousness. But the impulse to this development, as well as the vigour for it, comes from the life that is to be transcended. For that further life of which the woman is the symbol comprises, at any rate as she apprehends it and aspires to it, more than 'religion and love and morality'; the passage quoted above about the advantage enjoyed by the vicar's and the curate's children makes that plain. Lawrence has been called a snob; with what absurdity that passage sufficiently suggests. It gives an inkling, too, of the supreme qualifications of a great novelist for the work of a social

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historian, for it illustrates the subtlety of Lawrence's study of an actual civilization. In that civilization class differences play a great part, and of these Lawrence seems to me an incomparably sensitive and penetrating observer. But of class-feeling in the ordinary sense—of snobbery, direct or inverted, or any of its relations—he has none. He can, as in that superlatively fine early tale, *The Daughters of the Vicar* (1911-13) show class as the deadly enemy of life. But he does this in no democratic spirit, and displays no animus against the upper-middle-class as such—the class to which the unhappy family of the vicar belong, and because of their tenacious belonging are condemned to a pinched, isolating and life-thwarting gentility. And he can, on the other hand, record—with equal truth—another aspect of class:

> 'So the women of the village were fortunate. They saw themselves in the lady of the manor, each of them lived her own fulfilment in the life of Mrs. Hardy. And the Brangwen wife of the Marsh aspired beyond herself, towards the further life of the finer woman, towards the extended being she revealed, as a traveller in his self-contained manner reveals far-off countries present in himself. But why should a knowledge of far-off countries make a man's life a different thing, finer, bigger? And why is a man more than the beast and the cattle that serve him? It is the same thing.
>
> The male part of the poem was filled in by such men as the vicar and Lord William, lean, eager men with strange movements, men who had command of the further fields, whose lives ranged over a great extent. Ah, it was something very desirable to know, this touch of the wonderful men who had the power of thought and comprehension. The women of the village might be much fonder of Tom Brangwen, and more at their ease with him, yet if their lives had been robbed of the vicar, and of Lord William, the leading shoot would have been cut away from them, they would have been heavy and uninspired and inclined to hate'.

The imaginative values enjoyed by the women cannot be reduced to snobbery, and the superiorities they see, with substantial truth, as associated with class-differences are real.

Lawrence knows, and renders with the insight and art of a great creative writer, what have been the conditions of his own individual development; to be brought up in the environment of a living tradition—he is recording, in his rendering of provincial England, what in the concrete this has meant in an actual civilization. As a recorder of essential English history he is a great successor to George Eliot. I have already intimated the tactical reasons for insisting on George Eliot's name as properly to be associated with his. The propriety—the something very other than the incongruity that his general repute suggests—is especially apparent in the opening part of *The Rainbow*. It is not only that, in the life depicted, George Eliot would have recognized the known and poignantly

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familiar; she would have found nothing uncongenial in the ethical tone—the implicit moral and human valuations—of the presentment. Nor would she have found anything disconcerting about the art, though she would have been struck by its poetic intensity and resource and by the charged immediacy with which it evokes scenes and episodes that might (we can easily suppose her saying) have been imagined by herself.

Consider for instance the pages that show us Tom Brangwen—Tilly, the cross-eyed woman-servant having been defeated—faced with subduing, soothing and putting to bed his stepchild, the little Polish girl, unmanageable in her frenzy of terror and desolation at being denied her mother, who is in labour. George Eliot could not have given us, with that disturbing intensity, the child's blind sob-shaken stiffness, the controlled exasperation of the man, and the over-riding presence in the house of the long-drawn-out crisis, in relation to which he can only do what he feels he cannot do—wait. Nor could she have evoked with that sensuous immediacy the change to the wet night ('The child was suddenly still, shocked, finding the rain on its face and the darkness') and then to the 'other world' of the lantern-lit and warm-smelling barn, full of the tranquillizing wonder of its strangeness, when Brangwen goes with the child in his arms to feed the cows:

> 'The light shed softly on the timbered barn, on the white-washed walls, and the great heap of hay; instruments cast their shadows largely, a ladder rose to the dark arch of a loft. Outside there was the driving rain, inside, the softly-illuminated stillness and calmness of the barn.
>
> Holding the child on one arm, he set about preparing the food for the cows, filling a pan with chopped hay and brewer's grains and a little meal. The child, all wonder, watched what he did. A new being was created in her for the new conditions. Sometimes, a little spasm, eddying from the bygone storm of sobbing, shook her small body. Her eyes were wide and wondering, pathetic. She was silent, quite still.
>
> In a sort of dream, his heart sunk to the bottom, leaving the surface of him still, quite still, he rose with the panful of food, carefully balancing the child on one arm, the pan in the other hand. The silky fringe of the shawl swayed softly, grains and hay trickled to the floor; he went along a dimly-lit passage behind the mangers, where the horns of the cows pricked out of the obscurity. The child shrank, he balanced stiffly, rested the pan on the manger wall, and tipped out the food, half to this cow, half to the next. There was a noise of chains running, as the cows lifted or dropped their heads sharply; then a contented soothing sound, a long snuffing as the beasts ate in silence.
>
> The journey had to be performed several times. There was the rhythmic sound of the shovel in the barn, then the man returned walking stiffly between the two weights, the face of the child peering out from the shawl. Then the next time, as he

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stooped, she freed her arm and put it round his neck, clinging soft and warm, making all easier.

The beasts fed, he dropped the pan and sat down on a box, to arrange the child.

"Will the cows go to sleep now?" she said, catching her breath as she spoke.

"Yes".

"Will they eat all their stuff up first?"

"Yes. Hark at them".

And the two sat still listening to the snuffing and breathing of the cows, feeding in the sheds communicating with this small barn. The lantern shed a soft steady light from one wall. All outside was still in the rain. He looked down at the silky folds of the paisley shawl. It reminded him of his mother. She used to go to church in it. He was back again in the old irresponsibility and security, a boy at home'.

The last touch in the passage brings out the point of insisting that, great as are the differences, the relation to George Eliot is an essential one. The presence of the associations introduced by the shawl—the 'mother', 'church' and the 'boy at home'—is not merely felt as an emotional colouring, giving depth and richness to the recovered serenity which marks this phase of the little drama. It is also felt, not as something new, having a given dramatic and emotional felicity at this point (which it has), but as a presence that is being continued and re-emphasized: that of the pieties and sanctions that have played so essential a part in life as these early chapters of *The Rainbow* have evoked it. We see the moral and religious tradition they engage working in Tom Brangwen in his unpeasant-like lack of simplicity in relation to sex, and in his stubborn and difficult unsatisfaction—his troubled sense (and his power to act by it) of something more 'fulfilling' to be achieved than mere day-to-day living, with its routine and its relaxations:

'Did he, or did he not believe that he belonged to this world of Cossethay and Ilkeston? There was nothing in it he wanted. Yet could he ever get out of it? Was there anything in himself that would carry him out of it? Or was he a dunderheaded baby, not man enough to be like the other young fellows who drank a good deal and wenched a little without any question, and were satisfied'.

'Then Effie got married, and he was left in the house with only Tilly, the cross-eyed woman-servant who had been with them for fifteen years. He felt things coming to a close. All the time he had held himself stubbornly resistant to the action of the commonplace unreality which wanted to absorb him. But now he had to do something.

He was by nature temperate. Being sensitive and emotional, his nausea prevented him from drinking too much.

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But, in futile anger, with the greatest of determination and apparent good-humour, he began to drink in order to get drunk. "Damn it", he said to himself, "you must have it one road or another—you can't hitch your horse to the shadow of a gate-post—if you've got legs you've got to rise off your backside some time or other".

So he rose and went down to Ilkeston, rather awkwardly took his place amongst a gang of young bloods, stood drinks to the company, and discovered he could carry it off quite well. He had an idea that everybody in the room was a man after his own heart, that everything was glorious, everything was perfect. When somebody in alarm told him his coat pocket was on fire, he could only beam from a red, blissful face and say "Iss-all-ri-ight—iss all-ri-ight—it's a'right—let it be, let it be—" and he laughed with pleasure, and was rather indignant that the others should think it unnatural for his coat pocket to burn:—it was the happiest and most natural thing in the world—what?'

This might seem to be far enough away from George Eliot. Yet the common tradition speaks emphatically in this comment on the drinking-bout—a comment that, if in its explicitness the novelist's, gives us Tom's implicit judgment too.

'So, after three days of incessant brandy-drinking, he had burned out the youth from his blood. He had achieved this kindled state of oneness with all the world, which is the end of youth's most passionate desire. But he had achieved his satisfaction by obliterating his own individuality, that which it depended on his manhood to preserve and develop'.

That the note here is specifically Laurentian makes the significance the clearer. For it is the nature of the Laurentian that I am insisting on—the essential relation of Lawrence's genius to an upbringing 'in the environment of a living tradition'. He is indeed different from George Eliot, but not different in the way that seems widely taken for granted. An unrealizing glimpse of that truth, perhaps, can be detected behind the placing 'Puritan' so often applied to him. But what Lawrence brings from the civilization and the tradition that associate him with George Eliot is not a residual evangelizing earnestness, or a naïve provinciality of ethical temper, or a bent for insisting, in terms of a narrow untheological bigotry, that strait is the gate, and few there are that shall be saved. 'Upbringing' and 'environment' worked on him through the means by which (to quote Mr. Eliot's account[2] of tradition) 'the vitality of the past enriches the life of the present'; and it is not anything merely residual he brings from them, but his very formation, something that lives and grows, and that expresses itself in his mature insight and wisdom, his creative impulse, and his criticism of the contemporary civilized world.

[2]In *After Strange Gods*.

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It has been said of George Eliot, by way of a limiting judgment, that the word for her is 'ethical' rather than 'religious'. This could not have been said of Lawrence, and a great difference lies there. In such places as the following, though the peculiar vibration is Lawrence, the difference doesn't look very great; George Eliot (we feel) could have responded as to something wholly congenial to her habit and sensibility:

> 'But during the long February nights with the ewes in labour, looking out from the shelter into the flashing stars, he knew he did not belong to himself. He must admit that he was only fragmentary, something incomplete and subject. There were the stars in the dark heaven travelling, the whole host passing by on some eternal voyage. So he sat small and submissive to the great ordering'.

But when such passages are read as they come in the book it will be found that what I have called the distinctive vibration is associated with the way in which they belong to their contexts. That just quoted comes as part of the rendering of the painful effort of resolution through which Brangwen has to go before he can bring himself to propose to Lydia, the 'Polish lady':

> 'Gradually, even without seeing her, he came to know her. He would have liked to think of her as of something given into his protection, like a child without parents. But this was forbidden him. He had to come down from this pleasant view of the case—she might refuse him. And besides, he was afraid of her'.

She too, looking at 'the stranger who was not a gentleman, yet who insisted on coming into her life', resists the profound inner movement of response. Their coming together is felt as the contact between two utterly different pasts (for hers, too, is strongly present to us, evoked with a most poignant vividness). We have here the peculiar Laurentian sense of the paradox of personal relations, especially of those between a man and a woman which make and validate a marriage; the insistence that, the more intimate and essential the relations, the more must the intimacy itself be, for the two lives that are brought into so essential a contact, a mutual acceptance of their separateness and otherness. Love for Lawrence is no more an absolute than sex is his religion. What, in fact, strikes us as religious is the intensity with which his men and women, hearkening to their deepest needs and promptings as they seek 'fulfilment' in marriage, know that they 'do not belong to themselves', but are responsible to something that, in transcending the individual, transcends love and sex too.

F. R. LEAVIS.

[*To be concluded.*]

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POETIC SATIRE AND SATIRE IN VERSE:

A CONSIDERATION OF JONSON AND MASSINGER

'TOUT est dit, et l'on vient trop tard': the tag might certainly seem valid in this particular field of literary study. But perhaps some of it needs repeating—especially the fact, with further documentation, that Jonson is a great comic poet, of a unique kind—and perhaps it is not too late to look at his greatness from another and slightly different view-point. (If, indeed, it is that—since writing this, I have looked again through L. C. Knights's *Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson*, to realize how little has slipped the author's attention and how difficult it is to know whether one has really discovered anything fresh for oneself).

That view-point might be indicated by quoting a remark from an essay recently handed me by an American student at a British Summer School. The impact of Jonson on him had been all the greater in that his instructors had omitted to distinguish between Jonson and those other misty figures along the outer fringes of the Age of Shakespeare; in particular he had been impressed by the brilliant vigour of the character Volpone: 'Jonson was tortured by Volpone', he wrote, 'this great character whom he was unable to control'. Though it has the virtue of enthusiasm—it is still something of a novelty to hear that Jonson was the kind of artist who could be tortured by anything—I found this rather discouraging in view of the time spent in attempting to indicate the very special nature of that control and the way in which it was identical with the very special genius of the author, and in suggesting that Jonson's satiric mode was one that not only could be poetic but, in fact, could only operate fully through poetry.

Our consideration of this individual satiric mode (individual in that it does not occur even elsewhere in Jonson, not at any rate in such perfect adjustment) takes a form for whose elementariness I should apologize. It begins from the obvious fact that *Volpone* contains no *good* characters. Celia and Bonario are good, but they are not characters; the Avocatori are neither characters nor good. But a useful distinction may be drawn between the two groups of rogues who constitute the *dramatis personæ*: in the first we may place Voltore, Corbaccio and Corvino (I think Lady Would-be can be ignored altogether), and in the second Volpone and Mosca. While most commentators have recognized the presence

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in the play of certain strongly-held moral standards, it has not always been allowed that these standards are brought effectively into play. Thus Herford and Simpson state in the preface to their edition that 'Jonson's grip as a dramatist is almost solely upon the characters that offend his ideals . . . *Volpone* is . . . even repellent by reason of the remote, abstruse, and at times scarcely human, types of criminality among which we move'. The atmosphere of the play, that is to say, is identical with the nature of the characters: as the characters are all criminal, the atmosphere of the play is one of criminality. And that, of course, is a deduction which, in the case of perhaps every comic dramatist outside Jonson, would be correct; it is a style of reasoning which later drama has certainly done little to discourage; but it is still not applicable to the play *Volpone*.

The first group of characters presents no problem as regards 'placing'. Volpone and Mosca provide the positive standards by which they are judged and disposed of, and it is perhaps not going too far to describe them as *moral* standards. This is a conventional instance of character manipulation, though even at that it deserves a closer look. For it is done in two ways. Firstly, in explicitly critical speeches in which Volpone and Mosca are speaking neither quite 'in character' nor, however, exactly 'out of character', such as (in Act I),

> Hood an ass with reverend purple,
> So you can hide his two ambitious ears,
> And he shall pass for a cathedral doctor

or Volpone's impressive reflections on the vanity of avarice in the aged, with its biblical echoes,

> So many cares, so many maladies,
> So many fears attending on old age,
> Yea, death so often call'd on, as no wish
> Can be more frequent with them, their limbs faint,
> Their senses dull, their seeing, hearing, going,
> All dead before them; yea, their very teeth,
> Their instruments of eating, failing them:
> Yet this is reckoned life!

Similarly, the comments which Mosca and Volpone make on Voltore's performance in court (Act V, Sc. I) or, more brutally, Mosca's summing-up of their characters as one by one the 'heir' dismisses the unsuccessful suitors. And one might mention here that early conversation of the two greater rogues with its general condemnation of both miserliness and the current ways of getting rich quickly—especially as it contains two lines which should prepare us for the more important kind of satire that is taking place simultaneously: the lines spoken by Volpone,

> I . . . have no mills for iron,
> Oil, corn, or men, to grind them into powder.

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The words 'or men', that quiet, explosive interjection, are still too often unnoticed; or, as excuse for neglecting them, the fact is offered that they are spoken by Volpone, who thereby adds hypocrisy to his other vices.

The second and more effective means whereby the 'birds of prey' are exposed is simply their juxtaposition with Volpone and Mosca. Vulture, raven and crow have no advantage over fox and fly where morality is concerned, and they lag far behind in respect of vivacity, vigour and imagination. Their utter poverty of spirit—for their sin is what seems to be the antithesis of magnificence—is emphasized by the contrast with Mosca's shrewdness and agility, his 'intelligence', and with Volpone's romantic exuberance and joy in living. Here both plot and poetry can be adduced: the poetry of Mosca's panegyric on the art of parasitism—

> O! your parasite
> Is a most precious thing, dropt from above,
> Not bred 'mongst clods and clodpoles, here on earth

and the poetry of Volpone's response both to the beauty of gold,

> That lying here, among my other hoards,
> Shew'st like a flame by night, or like the day
> Struck out of chaos, when all darkness fled
> Unto the centre. O thou son of Sol,
> But brighter than thy father . . .

and to the beauty of woman; for, set against Corvino's behaviour, it redounds to Volpone's credit that he should tell Mosca,

> take my keys,
> Gold, plate, and jewels, all's at thy devotion;
> Employ them how thou wilt; nay, coin me too:
> So thou, in this, but crown my longings,

since Corvino, we agree, 'would have sold his part of Paradise, For ready money, had he met a cope-man'.

The first group of personages has thus been disposed of emphatically enough, and Jonson's instruments have been the ordinary ones of character deployment, plot and poetry (*i.e.* the poetry of the opposition). But neither poetry (since this all belongs to them) nor plot (for it seems an almost undeserved piece of bad luck that Volpone should be ruined by Mosca's disloyalty and greed, and the appropriateness only emerges on a fuller apprehension of the play) will suffice to dismiss the second group—the more efficient rogues. Nor, of course, is there any character left in a position to dispute with them.

What Jonson here makes use of is something deeper than the simple irony which has served so far—the irony which some have found, for instance, in Volpone's exclamation, 'What a rare punishment Is avarice to itself!' (in any case, Volpone's sin is not precisely avarice, nor would such weak irony effect much against the love poetry). There is only one character in the play

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who is sufficiently powerful to pronounce judgment on Volpone with any conviction, and that is Volpone himself; he is condemned out of his own mouth, and, to make the condemnation more radical, at exactly those moments when to all appearances (and certainly in his own opinion) he rises most emphatically above the sordidness of his surroundings.

The particular mode of control which Jonson exerts over the protagonist whom he has so magnificently built up, then, has nothing to do with 'character' in the usual sense of the word, nothing to do with the actions of the story, nothing to do with the expressed sentiments: it is a matter of imagery and rhythm. This is poetic satire at its very finest, its rarest, where the word 'poetic' and the word 'satire' seem, in that combination, inadequate to describe what is going on.

What goes on can be seen more easily than usual in the lines which Mosca addresses to Voltore in Act I:

> gentle sir,
> When you do come to swim in golden lard,
> Up to the arms in honey, that your chin
> Is borne up stiff, with fatness of the flood,
> Think on your vassal; but remember me:
> I have not been your worst of clients.

Mosca is here engaged apparently in prefiguring Voltore's idea of Paradise, the beatitude of complete wealth; and the metaphors, an editor has remarked, are those of the East. If we first take them at their face value—or rather at the value which the situation would seem to imply—we soon experience a feeling of revulsion—who would want to swim in a sea of golden lard, or even honey?—for the richness is one that sticks in the throat. But the ambiguity of the imagery is obvious enough here: for one thing, the cheat is addressing the gull; for another, we are prepared for caricature by the farcical description of the lawyer at work which has preceded it and, in any case, the lush hypocrisy of the final gesture would clinch the matter. The case is more difficult, the caricature is much less aptly described as caricature, when it is a question of Volpone addressing himself.

A glance at the opening speech will be illuminating here. Volpone apostrophizes his gold in a fine passage that has sometimes passed for 'pure' poetry. What asks for attention is the religious terminology, more exactly the language of worship. The speech begins with two such references: 'Open the shrine, that I may see my saint', and 'Hail the world's soul and mine'. This is followed by the allusion to the creation, already quoted, and then come two lines packed with similar imagery—

> let me kiss
> With adoration, thee, and every relick
> Of sacred treasure in this blessed room—

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a kind of tautology which cannot be explained away by speaking of Jonson's characteristically *packed* verse. The language of adoration persists in

> Thou being the best of things, and far transcending
> All style of joy, in children, parents, friends,
> Or any other waking dream on earth

and a little later,

> Dear saint,
> Riches, the dumb god . . .
> The price of souls; even hell, with thee to boot,
> Is made worth heaven.

We might be inclined merely to call this magnificent rhetoric and point to the conventional metaphor of Mammon-worship by way of explaining away the religious paraphernalia, but I think that both the blasphemous use of language and the exaggeration of the metaphor would be more apparent to Jonson's contemporaries. It is the heaped repetitiveness of the passage, the hammering away at the godlike qualities of gold, that I wish to indicate here—along with the unctuous rhythm of 'Such are thy beauties and our loves', and the curious lapse into paganism (though still worship) in the lines,

> Thy looks when they to Venus did ascribe,
> They should have given her twenty thousand Cupids—

for why 'twenty thousand'? It savours of book-keeping: a business man's attempt to be open-handed.

Jonson's contemporaries, because they would not need to research into mediæval feeling and because they would not feel that this rhetoric needed explicit repudiation, might be quicker to detect the delicate caricature of the verse and to perceive the corruption that is implied. Not the evil, but the corruption—the inward weakness of the man who is incapable of worshipping anything that is not tangible and in front of his eyes and is therefore inclined to over-express whatever he can rise to in the way of adoration. Volpone protests too much.

His adoration of gold gives way to an adoration of Celia's beauty—the twenty thousand Cupids have their revenge—and we have what we might call Jonson's anthology pieces. All the apparatus of magnificence is there: references to 'the great Valois', Antinous the handsome page of Hadrian, 'the brave Egyptian queen', and the notoriously extravagant Lollia Paulina, are followed by the histrionic gesture, 'take these, And wear, and lose them', and then by promises of Heliogabalian banquets—

> The heads of parrots, tongues of nightingales,
> The brains of peacocks, and of estriches,
> Shall be our food: and, could we get the phœnix,
> Though nature lost her kind, she were our dish.

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I think it will be agreed that what strikes us about Volpone's reference to the phœnix, his empty threat to destroy a 'natural' species for the sake of titillation, is less its contribution towards magnificence than its blasphemy, and less its blasphemy than its comicness. In spite of all the poetic associations of the phœnix, the image which presents us with this over-cooked bird on the dining-table is as double-edged, if more cunningly so, as the golden lard and honey in which Voltore was to swim. We do not need Celia's pious horror at 'these sensual baits' to assure us that such luxuries are only worth having to those who lack the essentials.

The next speech is heavy with the machinery of the grand passion—all of it except perhaps the passion. It commences like the catalogue of some fashionable and very expensive stores: spirit of roses and violets, the milk of unicorns, panthers' breath and Cretan wines. To add to the general joy, the dwarf, eunuch and fool will perform their pieces. (Another student suggested that Volpone's curious household would underline his taste for the exotic and unnatural—stage production might bring this out, and it might also give point to the mountebank scene—which is hard going on the page—in showing us Volpone as a charlatan posing as a charlatan). The speech then continues with allusions to 'Ovid's tales'—the hide-and-seek of the Metamorphoses, 'till we have quite run through, And wearied all the fables of the gods'—and the less classical fetishism of

> Then will I have thee in more modern forms,
> Attired like some sprightly dame of France,
> Brave Tuscan lady, or proud Spanish beauty . . .
> Or some quick Negro, or cold Russian . . .

and so on. All of this fits in very well with the clever, shady elegance of the Catullan imitations. But it ends with the most unsophisticated outburst,

> I should have done the act, and then have parley'd.
> Yield, or I'll force thee.

Volpone promises too much. Isn't all this not so much evidence of sexual vitality as of a lack of sexual vitality? His speeches have all the strength of well-packed verse, yet convey the suggestion that Volpone's strength is more *padded* than packed.

It is in these two speeches, together with the opening address, that Volpone is judged and found deficient; and it is typical of Jonson's economy and compression that Volpone should nevertheless have served already as the 'positive' standard by which the birds of prey have been judged and more summarily dismissed. But Volpone's behaviour in the rest of the play only confirms this judgment; the desperately hectic state of his mind is all the more obvious from the bedroom scene onwards. After his appearance in court, he cries,

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> Any device, now, of rare ingenious knavery,
> That would possess me with a violent laughter,
> Would make me up again.

It is this need for continuous and violent stimulants that leads to his undoing, when he conceives the 'jig' of making Mosca his heir:

> These are my fine conceits!
> I must be merry, with a mischief to me!
> What a vile wretch was I, that could not bear
> My fortune soberly? I must have my crotchets,
> And my conundrums!

To display the inferiority of others by swindling or hoaxing them was the palliative for his own sense of inferiority, of self-insufficiency; his victims provided him with compensation, in the way that his private entertainers would make him feel, by contrast, a 'complete man'. His was no genuine eccentricity, no special powers: what ruined him, after all, were mere 'crotchets and conundrums'.

We must admit then that Volpone is a great character only in a dramatic sense, and that Jonson's control over him is all the surer for being less obvious. And we have to revise the statement that his 'grip as a dramatist is almost solely upon the characters that offend his ideals': the quality of his poetic satire is such that a 'counter-Volpone' emerges—one is tempted to say that he walks the boards, but, at any rate, we do not have to rely on Celia and Bonario for relief from those 'remote, abstruse, and at times scarcely human, types of criminality' which have driven some critics to *The Alchemist* (a play that is open to charges of sordidness in a way that *Volpone* is not).

Canon A. H. Cruickshank remarks of Massinger that 'as so often in Euripides, the people say the sort of things that under the circumstances you would expect them to say in real life'. And furthermore the people often use the very words you would expect them to use in real life. For, to a greater degree than earlier dramatists, Massinger is concerned to be 'realistic'. Some little way behind his concern to be realistic comes his concern to be moralistic. There is nothing new to be said about the latter, though reference might be made in passing to several of the sore points to which he most often recurs (some he shares with Jonson)—the tyranny of emperors who think themselves equal to the gods, peacetime neglect of the old soldier, the social conditions that lead to widows' tears and orphans' cries, excessive interest in finery, and the punctilio of imported etiquette; that agreeable play, *A Very Woman*, contains references to cosmetics and the 'new creators, God tailor and god mercer', while *The Emperor of the East* has several Jonsonian figures in the Empiric, the Projector and the Master of the Habits and Manners.

Massinger's attempt to be 'convincing' sometimes has comic results—as in *Believe as You List*, when King Antiochus, returning

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to his country after twenty-two years of exile, reveals himself to his subjects:

1st Merchant. His own voice.
2nd Merchant. His very countenance, his forehead, eyes.
3rd Merchant. His nose, his very lip.
Berecinthius. His stature, speech.
1st Merchant. His very hand, leg, and foot, on the left side
Shorter than on the right.
2nd Merchant. The moles upon
His face and hands.
3rd Merchant. The scars caused by his hurts
On his right brow and head.
Berecinthius. The hollowness
Of his under-jaw, occasioned by the loss
Of a tooth pulled out by his chirurgion.
1st Merchant. To confirm us,
Tell us your chirurgion's name, when he served you
Antiochus. You all knew him,
As I do you: Demetrius Castor.
2nd Merchant. Strange!
3rd Merchant. But most infallibly true.[1]

Although there have previously been two imposters, we were long ago ready to agree that it was 'most infallibly true'; and we may feel that the poetic short-cut of the secret and unmistakable birth-mark, though hackneyed, would have been preferable to all this authenticity.

A good deal has been written about Massinger's style, and there is little one can add to the remarks of Eliot and Knights. One has only to compare this representative piece of Massinger (spoken by Francisco, the Duke's favourite, in *The Duke of Milan*, Act IV, Sc. I):

> once raised,
> The liberal courtiers made me master of
> Those virtues which I ne'er knew in myself:
> If I pretended to a jest, 'twas made one
> By their interpretation; if I offered
> To reason of philosophy, though absurdly,
> They had helps to save me, and without a blush
> Would swear that I, by nature, had more knowledge,
> Than others could acquire by any labour . . .

with Mosca's comment already quoted, 'Hood an ass with reverend purple . . . And he shall pass for a cathedral doctor': while Jonson strikes once and demolishes, Massinger saunters smoothly along,

[1]Cruickshank (*Philip Massinger*, Appendix VIII) mentions that the contribution of the 1st Merchant, 'His own (very) hand . . . on the right', is cancelled in the MS.

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explaining what does not need explanation, never daring to leave anything unsaid. Even ancient clichés have to be explicated in case the point should be missed—thus, elsewhere in the same play (and it is one of his more powerful tragedies),

> this is her private chamber,
> Where, like an hypocrite, not a true turtle,
> She seems to mourn her absent mate—

the point, already simple enough, is made three times: she is 'an hypocrite', she is 'not true' and she only 'seems to mourn'. A related phenomenon is Massinger's taste for explanatory asides and ejaculations (it cannot be only a question of stage convention): as the Duke is expiring in agony and the guards lead off the poisoner to death by torture, some bystander exclaims, 'A desperate wretch!' Similarly, Tapwell, the alehouse keeper of *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, comments on his downfall, 'Unthankful knaves are ever so rewarded', while Marrall, the term-driver, says on a like occasion,

> This is the haven
> False servants still arrive at—

explicit self-condemnation which has nothing to do either with Volpone's implicit self-condemnation or with his stoical farewell, 'This is call'd mortifying of a Fox'. It is at such moments that we sympathize with Leslie Stephen's remark that 'a more sickly type of morality . . . makes villains condemn themselves, because such a practice would save so much trouble to judges and moralists' and, we might add, poets.

Critics have noticed the lucidness of Massinger's verse—understanding of his meaning is rarely held up by original metaphor, so to speak—but not infrequently the absence of compressive and illuminating metaphor produces the opposite effect. In this speech from *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, Lady Allworth is saying something extremely simple,

> as all wrongs, though thrust into one scale,
> Slide of themselves off when right fills the other,
> And cannot bide the trial; so all wealth,
> I mean if ill-acquired, cemented to honour
> By virtuous ways achieved, and bravely purchased,
> Is but as rubbish poured into a river,
> (Howe'er intended to make good the bank,)
> Rendering the water, that was pure before,
> Polluted and unwholesome.

But its simplicity is lost in the tangled structure of the speech; what we have here is perhaps the antithesis of the poetic image, simply an amalgamation of what seem to be loose ends: an impression of smoothness derives from the movement of the verse (Massinger prizes highly this surface smoothness), but the thought is twisted and obscured by the superfluous parenthetical glosses. Massinger

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appears to have little faith in his audience's ability to follow a style that is in the slightest degree elliptical.

Or is it that? It seems to me that these habits add up to a lack of faith in metaphor—in, that is to say, *poetry*. The consistency and deliberateness of his technique suggest, at any rate, that it is this as well as an inability to write sustainedly in poetry. A loss of faith in the word: the dramatist's attention is moving towards a different conception of drama, one in which the word has much less power than it used to have.

It is generally admitted that *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* is Massinger's best play. If it is less of a piece, less complete in itself, than *The City Madam*, this is because the latter contains less to be contended with, and the urgency with which its problems are expressed is more tactfully adjusted to the kind of framework that Massinger was able to construct. *The City Madam* is an eminently *satisfying* play—though it must have been lack of intimacy with English that led a Dutch scholar to state that Luke Frugal 'puts us in mind of Iago', for what Luke rather puts us in mind of, compared with Sir Giles Overreach, is a serpent whose fangs have been drawn before the performance began. Luke remains for us a hypocrite, in that it is his hypocrisy, as such, that we are overwhelmingly conscious of, rather than any more positive vice.

Perhaps, then, we should better describe *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* as Massinger's most alive, most impressive, play. It suffers in comparison with *Volpone*, but then, so does every other Jacobean comedy; and *A New Way* is the only play outside Jonson that one would think of subjecting to such a comparison. The harsh vigour of the language marks it out at once, and it has what is for Massinger an evenly maintained pressure, right from the admirably dramatic beginning when Tapwell taunts Wellborn,

> Do not put yourself
> In too much heat, there being no water near
> To quench your thirst; and sure, for other liquor,
> As mighty ale, or beer, they are things, I take it,
> You must no more remember; not in a dream, sir.

Wellborn curses him,

> Why, thou unthankful villain, dar'st thou talk thus!
> Is not thy house, and all thou hast, my gift?

and he replies,

> I find it not in chalk; and Timothy Tapwell
> Does keep no other register.

It is a grim play; it conveys an uncomfortable reality in its presentation of relations between the nobleman and the business man, between the decayed gentleman and the tradespeople and, more interesting, between the implications of rank and the pleasures of the gentry. Much of the grimness is connected with Wellborn, who

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is distinguished from the conventional needy and dissolute gallant of Jacobean comedy by the bitter urgency behind his tirades and the way in which his ragged viciousness is interspersed with the remnants of good breeding:

> Am not I he
> Whose riots fed and clothed thee?

But of course it is Sir Giles Overreach who is the great character of the play; and as his greatness is built up with comparative economy we have time to glance at the manner of its construction. What first strikes us is a certain resemblance to Volpone (much deeper than the verbal similarities in Luke Frugal): Sir Giles, too, knows 'the use of riches'—he 'feeds high', 'keeps many servants' and is 'rich in his habit, vast in his expenses'. Something of a superman,

> He frights men out of their estates,
> And breaks through all law-nets, made to curb ill men,
> As they were cobwebs. No man dares reprove him.
> Such a spirit to dare and power to do were never
> Lodged so unluckily.

His desire for ennoblement, either because of the terms in which it is expressed or because it is his daughter's ennoblement he is planning rather than his own, does not strike us as contemptible or belittling; he advises her,

> Learn anything,
> And from any creature that may make thee great;
> From the devil himself.

In his essay, *Philip Massinger*, Eliot describes Sir Giles as 'essentially a great force directed upon small objects; a great force, a small mind; the terror of a dozen parishes instead of the conqueror of a world': but I have not experienced in reading the play any such suggestion of the parochial about his activities; within the terms of the play, in fact, he does threaten to conquer a world—'I must have all men sellers, And I the only purchaser'. And I think Eliot is also misplacing a stress when he goes on to say that 'the force is misapplied, attentuated, thwarted, by the man's vulgarity: he is a great man of the City, without fear, but with the most abject awe of the aristocracy'—for, whatever Sir Giles' attitude towards the idea of aristocracy, he certainly exhibits no awe of Lord Lovell in his uninhibited conversation with that aristocrat; there he remains the hard-headed business man, quite prepared to lose money for the sake of something he particularly fancies.

It is this scene that does so much to create the sensation of force, energy and will-power. When Lovell asks Sir Giles if he is 'not frighted with the imprecations and curses' of the families he has ruined, he replies,

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> Yes, as rocks are
> When foamy billows split themselves against
> Their flinty ribs; or as the moon is moved,
> When wolves, with hunger pined, howl at her brightness.
> I am of a solid temper, and, like these,
> Steer on a constant course . . .

And later,

> Nay, when my ears are pierced with widows' cries,
> And undone orphans wash with tears my threshold,
> I only think what 'tis to have my daughter
> Right honourable . . .

Again, I feel that Eliot is being over-subtle in detecting what he calls 'the wrong note' in this speech as opposed to the self-revelation of 'Thou art a fool; In being out of office, I am out of danger', It seems to me not so much an inconsistency of tone or intention in Massinger as a deliberate change of tone on the part of Sir Giles: the latter passage is a contemptuously phrased explanation thrown to his underling, the former is a 'formal' statement of policy to Lord Lovell (the new gods speaking to the old). To the audience, both are revealing, both are operative.

Sir Giles then stresses the 'true delight' he has in 'my arrival to my wealth these dark And crooked ways'—which reminds us again of Volpone ('I glory More in the cunning purchase of my wealth, Than in the glad possession'), except that the latter was discharged of responsibility for 'the widow's or the orphan's tears'; even so, it was Volpone who described conscience as 'the beggar's virtue', which Sir Giles varies to 'Patience, the beggar's virtue'. The conversation ends with a very strong exit for Sir Giles, and Lovell is left 'bathed all over in a cold sweat'.

Sir Giles, however, is brought to the ground, and by a piece of unlikely trickery better suited to the lower reaches of *Dr. Faustus* (we remember that Mosca's double-crossing of Volpone was both feasible and to the point); he runs mad, threatens the assembled company, but is unable to draw his sword—

> Some undone widow sits upon mine arm,
> And takes away the use of't; and my sword,
> Glued to my scabbard with wronged orphans' tears,
> Will not be drawn . . .

(that is perhaps the one point at which Massinger's widows and orphans really come alive). He is overcome by force of numbers and dragged off to some dark room for the usual therapeutic treatment.

But poetically speaking, Sir Giles simply is *not* overcome, for there is nothing in the play that can stand up to the poetic conveyance of his purposefulness, his energy in pursuing his purposes and his terrifying response to their collapse (one can understand the furore which Kean created in the part). The poetry through which

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Sir Giles has been created lacks the double nature of Volpone's great revelatory speeches, and the devices of intrigue and character opposition on which Massinger relies to counteract and dismiss the villain have let him down. Wellborn, though he has been reclaimed from poverty and given the chance to redeem his reputation on the battle-field, remains profoundly ambiguous; the young lovers are perhaps more attractive than Lorenzo and Jessica, but this is more than neutralized by the fact that the 'magic' whereby the villain is foiled lacks all the deeper associations of the flesh and blood in *The Merchant of Venice*; Lady Allworth has a certain dignity and charm, though her sudden compliance with the disreputable Wellborn's requests is hardly made convincing by his reminding her of the service he did her late husband (her cook exclaims, 'Are not we base rogues, That could forget this?'). While Lord Lovell, who ought to be a key figure in that he represents the union of 'honour' (*i.e.* rank)—which Sir Giles desires—with 'conscience'—which Sir Giles despises, is in effect little more than the taxidermic idea of a soldier and a gentleman. Neither he nor Lady Allworth seem to have a very clear understanding of what is happening, and they give the impression of acting according to prejudice rather than belief.

In short, the poetry of the play—when Massinger wrote poetry—has operated in a contrary direction to plot, character alignment and moral intention. The same kind of thing happens elsewhere in Massinger; *The Guardian*, for instance, is a play in which plot mechanisms run riot. By using very nearly every possible device—disguise, double disguise, mistaken identity, midnight elopement, return from the dead and so on—a truly remarkable happy ending is achieved, a climax of discoveries, repentances and immense nobility of spirit—while the rest of the play, if one pays any attention to what is said, is as prurient as anything in the drama of the time. But that is merely a common enough case of language and general tone running counter to the prescribed plot; the failure in *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* is greater because what is attempted is so much greater.

Sir Giles Overreach, then, is the character whom his author could not control. Massinger created him by means of poetry, and then attempted to destroy him with the feebler means of overt moralizing, plot machinery and character manipulation. But metaphor took its revenge for his distrust of metaphor. Which, I fear, is only another way of saying what has never been denied: that Massinger occupies an interesting transitional point between the Elizabethan and the Restoration, between the old poetic drama and the modern drama of prose. The point of my title was to distinguish between two modes which are sometimes confused, one of which is very rare indeed: Jonson wrote poetic satire, Massinger wrote satire in verse.

D. J. ENRIGHT.

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COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

MR. PRYCE-JONES, THE BRITISH COUNCIL AND BRITISH CULTURE

A booklet was published last year for the British Council under the title *The Year's Work in Literature, 1950*, edited by Mr. John Lehmann. The report it offers on 'Literary Periodicals' is by Mr. Alan Pryce-Jones. He mentions this review in the first sentence, and repeatedly thereafter: no one is to suggest that *Scrutiny*, this time, has been ignored or slighted. In fact, he relates his main argument to a 'diagnosis' that he has extracted, his readers are to understand, from the manifesto that appeared in the first number.

> 'At first sight, it looks as if the editors of *Scrutiny*, in this opening manifesto, had hit on the reason for a decline in literary journalism. What was wanted, they suggested, was a review not purely literary but conscious of the larger contemporary world of which literature forms one part. By implication, therefore, no consistent standards of criticism were discernible in the early 1930's, and so the public lay open to the blandishments of rival cliques, none of them strong enough or coherent enough to impose accepted values upon the rest. Furthermore, a literature divorced from everyday stresses of civilized life must naturally find it impossible to attract enough supporters to maintain a healthy number of literary reviews'.

About this 'diagnosis' he is urbanely ironical:

> 'Oddly enough, though, such reviews, when later they came into being in accordance with the precepts of *Scrutiny*, held their own no better than the rest . . .'.

The Editors, it is true, do say that, while finding their centre in literary criticism, they intend also to print articles and reviews dealing with other-than-literary subjects. But a reader who carried away the impression that, in saying this, they were offering their 'diagnosis'—diagnosis of the disease that made a calculated and resolute effort to assert the function of criticism timely—must have given the manifesto a very small part indeed of his attention (if 'attention' is a word that applies at all). The 'diagnosis' actually offered had been enforced by a great weight of marshalled evidence in *Fiction and the Reading Public*, a work of research published just before the first number of *Scrutiny* came out. Mr. Pryce-Jones will perhaps say that he has not heard of *Fiction and*

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the Reading Public. He has, however, heard of *Scrutiny*, and even had, apparently, the first volume in front of him. If he had looked at the second number in that volume he would have found an article called *What's Wrong with Criticism?*

That article gives a developed statement of the 'diagnosis' in a survey of the contemporary situation. Its argument is that, when, as a result of the process that may be indicated by references to the Education Act of 1870, and the name of Lord Northcliffe, the appeal to the Common Reader—representative of a coherent cultivated public—can no longer be made, the control of the currency of accepted valuations, the organs of critical authority and the positions of advantage for the influencing of taste will get into hands the business of which is not to promote the function of criticism, but to replace it by something else. And the article shows with some particularity that the contemporary literary world is controlled by a system of personal and institutional relations that, pursuing its own ends, is inevitably hostile both to the play of criticism, and to the emergence and recognition of the new and significant.

Mr. Pryce-Jones could not, of course, be expected to point out that in the twenty years since *What's Wrong with Criticism?* was written the system has become much more formidable in its comprehensiveness and its power—a fact so signally illustrated by the circumstances of his report. This, presumably, was commissioned by Mr. John Lehmann, the editor of *The Year's Work in Literature, 1950*, which is published for the British Council—which is financed out of public funds and has the august and authoritative impersonality of an institution. How, and by whom, we ask, are its literary policy determined and its literary jobs distributed? Three years ago, another British Council publication, *Prose Literature since 1939* (by Mr. John Hayward), evoked this comment in *Scrutiny* (December, 1948):

> 'It would of course be "hypercritical" to suggest (though Americans and foreigners in the present writer's hearing have said it) that nothing could be worse for the prestige and influence of British Letters abroad than Mr. Hayward's presentment of the currency values of Metropolitan literary society and the associated University milieux as the distinctions and achievements of contemporary England'.

Who can doubt that this suggests fairly enough the way in which the promotion of cultural ends by instruction and guidance 'published for the British Council' must, in sum, inevitably work? A perusal of the booklet in which Mr. Pryce-Jones's article appears will hardly tend towards any other conclusion. The valuations, the ethos and the criteria promulgated through the weeklies, the Sunday papers and the B.B.C., are provided by the British Council (financed out of public funds) with further means of imposing themselves and with a kind of institutional authority. And these British Council guides and surveys, it is to be noted, are not for

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foreign consumption only; they are to be found prominently displayed in the bookshops here, and clearly enjoy a considerable sale in the home-market—along with that growing series of essays on authors past and present which is commissioned by, and published for, the British Council.

Mr. Pryce-Jones—who, after all, can express his view of things in the Third Programme, and may well feel that the editorial policy of *The Times Literary Supplement* is in good hands—does not glance at this aspect of contemporary letters. Instead, he reflects that criticism has always been in a bad way, and that even if it should really be in a bad way, there would be no cause for worrying. The process of his argument, as a matter of fact, is not clear, but this, at any rate, is where it leads him:

> '. . . the exact kind of crisis which hits the literary world in each generation is not very important. What is important is whether there are the writers to put it to use. And between the existence of such writers and the prosperity of literary reviews there is no connection whatever'.

This faith might be found touching—if only one could think that it *was* faith and not indifference or cynicism. It offers us the pure Romantic conception of the creative individual. How does the great work come into the world? The individual of genius is born; taking the impact of Life, he finds himself inspired; the great work emerges. But even if it did emerge, it would still need to get published and recognized and sold; and if Mr. Pryce-Jones supposes that the system represented by the publication in which his survey appears has any overmastering tendency towards recognizing and fostering and backing the new stir of life—the original and significant and truly distinguished—a perusal of the contents of that publication, along with those of the other British Council publications, will show him to be under an illusion. The essential spirit and effect of such a system—which has for *raison d'être* the emancipating of literary distinction (a matter of kudos and prestige) from all dangerous relation to standards—must inevitably be inimical to the real thing, the new and living.

But it is inimical, further, in a more radical way, the possibility of which Mr. Pryce-Jones's Romantic innocence declines to perceive: it tends against the development and maturing of the talent, and so against the very conception of the significant work. For Matthew Arnold, when in the famous first essay of the First Series he deals with the dependence of the creative mind on the 'atmosphere' of 'ideas' and valuations in which it lives, is stating the obvious truth. And to bring up the young potential writer in a world in which, from schooldays on, he is exposed to the unanimous and authoritative suggestion that the chart of contemporary significances offered him by the Sunday papers will direct him to the sources of life and light is serving him worse than asking him to do for himself more than the individual talent can be hopefully asked to do.

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It is perhaps not surprising that an ability to display crude ignorance of the nature of criticism should go with Mr. Pryce-Jones's indifference to the function. Only the most elementary instruction meets the case. When one read in Mr. Noel Annan's *Leslie Stephen* (see chapter IX) an astonishing travesty of the idea and the practice of criticism as they are to be found in *Scrutiny* one reflected that the author's training had not been in the literary-critical field—though it was still disconcerting that the presumable qualifications to discuss Stephen's thought should be divorced from an elementary understanding of the nature of literary criticism. But where, one now has to ask—where among the professionals in the literary-critical field—is such elementary understanding to be counted on? Mr. Pryce-Jones is reputed to occupy the editorial chair of an augustly institutional critical weekly; this passage (confirming the effect of what has been quoted above) gives the measure of his enlightenment about the function he has it in charge to promote:

> 'There is, in other words, no desirable life of which literary reviews are an essential component and in which fixed standards of criticism gain a kind of legal backing . . .'.

'Fixed standards' ('impose accepted values')—no one who knew what 'standards' are could talk about 'fixed standards' or 'imposing them' or providing them with a 'legal backing'. A judgment is a real judgment, or it is nothing. It must, that is, be a sincere personal judgment; but it aspires to be more than personal. Essentially it has the form: 'This is so, is it not?' But the agreement appealed for must be real, or it serves no critical purpose and can bring no satisfaction to the critic. What his activity of its very nature aims at, in fact, is a collaborative exchange or commerce. Without a many-sided real exchange—the collaboration by which the object, the poem (for example), in which the individual minds meet, and at the same time the true judgments concerning it, are established—the function of criticism cannot be said to be working. Without a wide coherent public, capable of making its response felt—capable, that is, of taking a more or less active part in that collaboration—there is, for the critic, no effective appeal to standards. For standards (which are not of the order of the measures in the Weights and Measures Office) are 'there' only in and by the collaborative process that criticism essentially is.

These elementary truths, surely, are not in themselves difficult to grasp. The actual business of criticism, on the other hand, cannot be well performed without a special training, developing natural aptitude. A glance round at the contemporary scene—or a brief study of *The Year's Work in Literature, 1950*—will establish the point of insisting on that truism. The classic's training (or the historian's), however assiduously supplemented by brilliant talk among choice spirits, does not—the evidence is distressingly clear—qualify a writer for the intelligent discussion of literature. Literary criticism is a special discipline: to get that recognized must be an

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essential part of any serious concern to restore the function of criticism. And the insistence is the more necessary because the qualities of the 'literary mind' (to give that description the force it ought to have) are badly needed outside the literary-critical field. (For a recent illustration of the way in which they can tell in extra-literary work one may point to the critique of the Kinsey Report in Lionel Trilling's *The Liberal Imagination*).

'*Scrutiny* reads like the laboratory report of a small, but efficient laboratory'. If serious literary criticism (of very varied kinds) 'reads like' that to Mr. Pryce-Jones, it does; but there can be no excuse for suggesting, as *The Times Literary Supplement* did on a notorious occasion some eighteen months ago, that *Scrutiny* is associated with the view that criticism can be a science, or has done anything but discountenance the ambition to make it one or to win credence for the pretence that something of the nature of laboratory-method can have a place in it. Mr. Pryce-Jones grants, encouragingly, that the 'results' (of a 'purely local work') make 'good serviceable reading'. And it is indeed the fact that British Council representatives all over the world where the work is done—the work 'in the field'—testify that they have found *Scrutiny* uniquely serviceable ('I make my living out of *Scrutiny*' is the way one of them put it). For the 'purely local work' has effected a revaluation of an immense range of English literature of the past, from the fourteenth century on, as well as an appraisal of the output of the last twenty years. And the results (if 'plain fare at the best') have been found incomparably usable (as some appropriate department of the British Council may have registered, or at any rate can, if it wishes, for inquiry will bring in the evidence in profusion)—as well as very good to steal from.

It is an ironical memory that when the British Council first proposed to export *Scrutiny* officially it asked that it might have 'surplus' copies free of charge. When informed that there were no surplus copies, and, further, that all work in connexion with *Scrutiny* (except the printer's and the distributor's) was unpaid, and that losses had been met out of private and ill-furnished pockets, the British Council proposed to pay half-price for such copies as it might require. Some insistence was needed from the *Scrutiny* side before the British Council agreed to pay the full price.

Possibly Mr. John Lehmann's team, and the other commissioned authors who help the Council to promote the cause of British culture, perform *their* services free, out of a sense of public duty.

F.R.L.

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EDMUND WILSON OF THE 'NEW YORKER'

CLASSICS AND COMMERCIALS, by Edmund Wilson (W. H. Allen, 15/-).

Several years ago the critical reputation of Mr. Edmund Wilson in America was consigned to history by Mr. Stanley Edgar Hyman. Mr. Hyman acted in his capacity of Inquisitor for an emergent literary-critical dogma with pretensions to an inclusive science. This dogma was largely formulated by academics and loosely called 'new', although the 'new' orthodoxy now possessed a history, a hagiology, and a 'Summa' in Mr. Hyman's book, *The Armed Vision*. In this book his account of the qualifications of the ideal technician read like a description of Mr. Kenneth Burke. An 'amateur' like Edmund Wilson patently belonged to the old dispensation. Ironically, he had given some credence to Mr. Hyman's performance by anticipating these obsequies with his own obituary on the occasion of 'being bibliographed' by the library of his old university, Princeton, in 1943.

At this time, Mr. Wilson reviewed his undergraduate life at Princeton, his formative influences as a writer, his mission as critic, his career, his milieu. He includes these remarks in the present volume and they seem to me (in ways it is beyond my purpose to detail here) a remarkably compressed and revealing document. He was at the university just before the first World War. For anyone concerned with literature these were lively and exciting years in America, years to which Mr. Wilson nostalgically hearkens. Ezra Pound, that archetypal Yankee, had already escaped to England where he was making his high intransigent claims for the Artit, but he was shouting back exhortation and encouragement across the water. At home, the magazine *Poetry* was a revolutionary paper; James Huneker was instructing the provincial Philistine in what he had missed of European music and literature of the past fifty years; Mencken was shocking the 'Booboisie' into an elementary awareness of other than purely mercantile values. And the young Edmund Wilson was editing the 'Lit' (a college paper) and aspiring to the vocation of 'writer'. 'You read Shakespeare, Shelley, George Meredith, Dostoevsky, Ibsen, and you wanted, however imperfectly and on however infinitesimal a scale, to learn their trade and have the freedom of their company'. To the young Wilson, after the war and after Huneker and Mencken, there were 'two roads still to be broken' in pushing forward the 'Enlightenment': 'the road to the understanding of the most recent literary events in the larger international world—Joyce, Eliot, Proust, etc.—which were already out of the range of readers the limits of whose taste had been fixed by *Egoists* and *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*; and to bring home to the "bourgeois" intellectual world the most recent developments of

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Marxism in connection with the Russian Revolution'. However grandiose (or general) a description, the first was the concern which was to occupy Wilson, as popularizer and publicist, during the most fruitful period of his life, a period of real distinction in its way. By the time he came to review his career (still a comparatively young man) the atmosphere had changed, an age had ended. The ideals had either been discredited (Marxism) or achieved (in established reputations). Or such is Wilson's view of it (and it is indicative of his idea of the critic-champion), for the 'blood-heating crises that have been recurring periodically in literature since the first night of *Hernani* in 1830: howls of denunciation, defiant applause and defence, final vindication in triumph' seemed unlikely to recur for Edmund Wilson. *Finnegan's Wake,* which he feels should have been an occasion 'for young men to wear the red vest of Gautier . . . was received with incurious calm . . . . [The book] went straight from the hands of Joyce into the hands of the college professors, and is to-day not a literary issue but a subject of academic research'. 'And what', asked Mr. Wilson, in closing this review of his life and times, 'is the next logical step?'

The 'next' step (if it was 'logical' it must have been the logic of an ironic historic instinct) for the 'old-red-waistcoat-wearer', the Communist, the publicist of the avant-garde, was to join the *New Yorker* as a staff reviewer—the *New Yorker,* that 'humorous' magazine that teaches the frazzled denizens of Megalopolis and its garden suburbs to discount themselves as a bitter-sweet joke.

Classics and Commercials is largely made up of the reviews Mr. Wilson has written for that magazine during the past eight years and they aren't likely to persuade the reader that he has enjoyed his work. He appears to have succumbed to a virulent and communicable boredom. It is true that the limitations of space might explain the often cursory and superficial account of his subject, and the exigencies of regular reviewing excuse the fatigue. But an uncomfortable restriction is revealed in Mr. Wilson's relation to his average reader. For this person, 'Enlightenment' has *occurred.* He is not the illiterate Mencken was cajolling or insulting: he is *semi*-literate. He has probably been to 'college' where a smattering of 'culture' was part of the routine. He may well have paid his tribute to literature in an undergraduate enthusiasm. In effect he is case-hardened; he is not susceptible. But he is substantially the type in whose image the *New Yorker* was founded and on whose patronage it depends. He is to be amused, above all, confirmed in his complacency incidentally, and titillated (not aroused) by the well-insulated jibes at his expense.

Mr. Wilson can make do most of the time by relying on his skill as a summarizer for a synopsis of a book, or he can exploit his ingenuity as a literary 'private eye' to dig up biographical gossip, or he can supply his readers with 'instruction' in the form of 'background' notes from the literary text books. More rarely, he finds occasion for a completely deflating attack on Somerset Maugham or a sensible and persuasive corrective to the cult of Kafka.

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But should the advocate of serious writing be tempted to break new roads, the timidity of the proffered simplification is nothing less than astonishing. *Finnegan's Wake*, as has been suggested, is one of his pet cults, but it is a cult to which he offers the barest initiation, and that usually in the nature of enconiums for the book ('one of the top works of literature of our times'; 'one of the few great intellectual and aesthetic treats'; 'it is an exciting, a unique experience to find pages that have seemed to us meaningless start into vivid life, full of energy, brilliance, passion'). But granting Mr. Wilson's genuine (if uncommunicated) enthusiasm, of what persuasive force is such a compromise as this, dangled, perhaps, before the addicts of detective fiction and crossword puzzles? 'For people who do like to solve puzzles, the puzzles are fun to solve. To-day, when we are getting so many books in which the style is perfectly clear but the meaning non-existent or equivocal, it affords a certain satisfaction to read something that looks like nonsense on the surface but underneath makes perfect sense'. Invest the price of the book, is Mr. Wilson's tip to the customers: 'If you have not tried *Finnegan's Wake*, you cannot do better than get it and get the Campbell-Robinson key [constructed by a "folklore scholar" and an editor of *Reader's Digest*] and prepare to have them around for years'. Mr. Wilson is too perspicacious for that! Surely he recognizes the original of that appeal to the customers—it is the appeal of the Book Clubs which press on subscribers, as 'bonuses', such ornaments to the 'library' as a 'de luxe' edition of Proust or a volume of the now modish Dr. Schweitzer.

This, one might claim with sympathy, is Edmund Wilson of the *New Yorker* making his wry best of a distasteful situation. But there are other persistent notes in these reviews disturbing to anyone inclined to respect the writer's more substantial work. They hint that Mr. Wilson's attitude to literature may not be incompatible, after all, with the apathy of his *New Yorker* public, for they remind us that a man may be busy about books without a lively concern for, or appreciation of, the writing itself. 'Style' is a key word in Mr. Wilson's critical vocabulary, and one comes to suspect that it means to him much the same thing as to the young aspirant to fine writing on the 'Lit', or, for that matter, to that young man's 'English' instructor. (There is Mr. Wilson's habit of going through his subject's 'compositions' with a blue pencil, alert for cliché and grammatical errors). 'Style' in this sense may be a mere correctness, or a decorative excrescence, or an engaging idiosyncrasy—in almost every case something detachable from the matter to hand and to be savoured for itself. In Samuel Johnson's style he relishes 'the phrases, the sentences, the paragraphs, that one can feel between one's teeth'. Well, pass that, but when we come to Mr Cyril Connolly (that 'personality of some courage and distinction' who may 'turn out to stick' as a classic of the language) we stop short. When Mr. Wilson describes Mr. Connolly's writing as 'delicious and crisp, like good food to the taste, fresh and bright, like new sights to the eye', we suspect that he is going for his sensations

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rather beyond anything the writer could pretend to offer. Max Beerbohm is another candidate for classic status, and Ronald Firbank, too, is 'likely to become a classic'. In the latter's style our attention is called (and alerted, one might add,) to 'the tension behind it of the effort to find the felicitous or the witty phrase which will render the essence of something'. Yes, but of what? He evidences Firbank's 'artistic seriousness', which is true enough as far as it goes, but it is characteristic of Mr. Wilson's somewhat ingenuous respect for the artist's calling that the 'dedication' (for 'Art was his only sainthood') assures a rewarding 'seriousnesss' for the reader. What it comes to is that Mr. Wilson's fortuitous notion of 'style' often bewitches him and traps him in disproportionate evaluation of writers who are only curious or frivolous, at best, and at worst vapid.

But then it occurs to one that evaluation of a given writer is not Mr. Wilson's concern as a critic. His interest is usually peripheral to the work at hand, and his instinct for 'obsessions which recur in [a writer's] work and to which we can find the key in his life'. It is true that Mr. Wilson has made some of his most ingenious discoveries turning over stones in the literary graveyard. But some questions on this kind of activity are provoked by his comments on a not dissimilar writer, Van Wyck Brooks. He is talking of Brooks's attempt (in *The World of Washington Irving*) to convey Fennimore Cooper's quality through his own incantatory paraphrase of the novelist's prose: 'The creation is not Cooper's but Brooks's; he has sifted out the images from [one of Cooper's stories] and made out of them something quite new . . . . With anybody like Cooper Mr. Brooks has a field almost like that of the artist who deals directly with crude experience. And how many inferior or tedious writers he must have transmuted in this book . . . . We are amazed at the skill with which Brooks has been turning the old carriage springs, spectacle frames and pickaxes of 1800-1840 into a fine-beaten kind of white gold'. The point being that Mr. Wilson instances this kind of criticism with applause, and if Brooks's performance isn't criticism (of a kind), what is it? But no; Brooks is not a critic, we are told; he is a cultural historian. 'The paradox of Brooks's career is that he has himself been able to develop into one of the first-rate American writers of his time without achieving any commensurate development of his appreciation of other writers save as material for cultural history'. It is behind that word 'paradox' that Mr. Wilson escapes what is a real contradiction: how can a man write 'cultural history' without the discernment to appreciate the writers who so largely record and make accessible to a people its culture? And what are we to make of one who finds such a defective critic (for, I repeat, if Brooks is not a critic he's nothing worth the effort of naming) a 'first-rate' writer?

These questions seem to me all the more pertinent because if Brooks the cultural historian is also, willy-nilly, a critic, Wilson the critic is also, in his most valuable work and with his tangential interest in literature, something we may call for lack of another

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term a 'cultural historian', and it is interesting to have Mr. Wilson's views on the qualifications for such work. But besides critical insight and discrimination these qualifications, it seems to me, should include at the very least a disinterested comprehension of a people's sentiments and beliefs. And if this is so, Mr. Wilson is occasionally handicapped by what can be most suggestively termed his cranks. His anglophobia is an instance. Another is implied in his naïve and invidious reference to 'the obedient Catholic [who] swallows the priest's doctrine'. But these cranks can be more serious, and then 'handicapped' is scarcely the description of Mr. Wilson's limitations: *disqualified*, rather. In a note, printed in this volume, on Mr. Evelyn Waugh's *The Loved One*, Mr. Wilson has this to say on the author's satire of 'those de luxe California cemeteries that attempt to render death less unpleasant by exploiting all the resources of landscape-gardening and Hollywood mummery. To the non-religious reader . . . the patrons and proprietors of Whispering Glades [the cemetery in the book] seem more sensible and less absurd than the priest-guided Evelyn Waugh. What the former are trying to do is, after all, merely to gloss over physical death with smooth lawns and soothing rites; but, for the Catholic, the fact of death is not to be faced at all: he is solaced with the fantasy of another world in which everyone who has died in the flesh is somehow supposed to be still alive and in which it is supposed to be possible to help souls advance themselves by buying candles to burn in churches. The trappings invented for this other world by imaginative believers in the Christian myth . . . beat anything concocted by Whispering Glades'. It is true that Mr. Waugh is a convert to the Roman Catholic Church, but he doesn't find it necessary in his book to invoke dogma or to appeal to any specific religious belief to condemn a morbid preoccupation with physical dissolution in death. It is Mr. Waugh's point that this vulgarization of death by grotesque mortuary art and the magic of cosmetics parallels a shrivelled and vulgar attitude to *life*. If Mr. Wilson finds the attitude to life implicit in Whispering Glades more congenial than that explicit in the traditional 'Christian myth', that should prove 'disturbing', as I said above, 'to anyone inclined to respect, etc'. Rather, 'depressing' would be the more sympathetic term.

JOHN FARRELLY.

AN APPROACH TO SOPHOCLES

SOPHOCLES THE DRAMATIST, by A. J. A. Waldock (C.U.P., 16/-).
SHAKESPEARE'S TRAGEDIES, by G. B. Harrison (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 21/-).

The late Professor Waldock's *Paradise Lost and its Critics* was, it will be remembered, a book distinguished by what may be termed in the best meaning of the phrase a common-sense approach. The

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eye was all the time remorselessly on the object, stripping away the scholarly ingenuities and irrelevances that prevent the reader from seeing what the object is. In this work on a Greek dramatist he has used the same approach. There is the same freshness of tone, the same air of zestful satisfaction at disposing of so much lumber—for the book might well have been entitled *Sophocles and his Critics*. Plainly it is the work of a vigorous and distinguished mind, a fact which makes it all the more disagreeable to have to say that the book is, on the whole, a failure. Just what sort of failure will, I think, be apparent from a consideration of the opening chapter.

Professor Waldock's first chapter-heading is 'The historical method and its limitations'. The book is addressed as much to the reader who knows his Sophocles only in translation as to the classically trained, and the author is concerned that the former type of reader shall not be too discouraged by what would seem to be the vast amount of historical erudition necessary for the proper appreciation of Greek tragedy. He is rightly sceptical about the ultimate value of the kind of thing one finds in the notes to modern editions of Shakespeare. He admits that there are certain things one has to know about the 'background' of an author's work, but goes on to say: 'Historical criticism is guilty at times, however, of something a little worse than excess. It can, on occasion, actually hinder, it can clog and hamper instead of help. There are times when one feels that its instruments are blunt—that the understanding, by itself, has a finer edge—or when one feels that it is a net of too coarse a mesh through which all that matters is slipping away'. That, taken by itself, is admirable; yet it is in the latter part of the same paragraph that doubts begin to arise. 'Consider, again, Antigone's act', says Professor Waldock, '—unconventional, rash, without precedent. Was it, in truth, unwomanly of her to assert herself so vigorously in a masculine world? Aristotle thought or pretended to think—that women should be meek, submissive and quiet'. Historical criticism, says the author, will not help us here. 'Here only one authority exists—the drama'. That is characteristic of Waldock's common-sense approach, and yet it is hard not to feel uncomfortable, not to feel that 'history' is being thrown overboard much too easily. Can Antigone's act, after all, be regarded as the mere perversity of one rather curious individual? Though it may be 'without precedent', does it not, in the play, imply a whole context of ideas and beliefs about human sanctities? Indeed, in the chapter devoted to the *Antigone*, Professor Waldock almost confesses as much. But one may best demonstrate what is basically wrong with the critical method of the whole book by quoting a key passage:

> 'There is the problem, for instance, of the audience. This problem, indeed, is crucial; if we go seriously astray there is no limit to the mistakes we may make. Now I would suggest, due allowances made, that there is only one assumption in this matter that has the slightest claim to historical point; it is the assumption that a typical Greek audience was very like a modern in sympathy,

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responsiveness, and the nature of the enjoyment it expected to find. There are hints that this really was so. It is one of the charms of the *Poetics* to feel within that sombre treatise a faint but very perceptible effusion of the Athenian theatre in action'.

Now, although one cannot but admire Professor Waldock in his desire to bring the Greek theatre out of the frozen distance of scholarship and nearer to the sympathetic comprehension of the human being of to-day, it is plain that such an assumption as that made in the passage quoted will not do. The Greeks, no doubt, were just as 'human' as we are, but one does not have to be much of a historian to realize that their reasons for going to the theatre were not those of a modern audience. The point is a delicate one, since over-insistence on the ritual aspect of Greek drama is likely to become a fruitful source of academic red-herrings. But it is well to remember that Greek tragedy did spring from the Festival of Dionysos, and that, even by the time of Sophocles, attendance at a performance was still essentially a religious experience. T. S. Eliot once made a remark to the effect that drama occurs somewhere on the line between ritual and realism, and it is obvious that Greek drama is near enough to the ritual end for echoes of actual ritual to be apparent when they are pointed out to us, though far enough advanced on the path to realism for them not to be apparent without demonstration. The ritual contest, the 'flyting', is the basis of the *Eumenides*, but though we may recognize this, it hardly affects our impression of the play, which is an intellectual drama presenting different points of view. Yet that basis is unmistakably there, and it would not seem too much to say that it is from the traditional, ritual element that Greek tragedy derives its special formal vividness and life. Professor Waldock takes none of these considerations into account, preferring to assume that the Greek theatre, 'due allowances made', was much the same as the theatre we know to-day. But that those 'allowances' are bigger and more disturbing than the author seems to have thought, he himself shows in a later chapter. The personnel of a Greek drama, he tells us, 'is strictly limited, and throughout the whole course of the action must remain so. This means, in effect, that an addition is almost necessarily followed by a subtraction'. That is a plain admission that there were peculiar circumstances conditioning the writing of plays, circumstances that did not exist in Elizabethan England, and do not exist to-day. Yet Professor Waldock does not seem to have realized the implications.

The question of the audience comes up in the Preface, which sets out the aims of the book: 'It is my conviction that, faced with a drama a group of cultivated people see the same thing—that there is little significant variation between one natural response and another. I develop in the following pages this doctrine of the "natural response". Variations from it usually arise because something has intervened to provoke an artificial response; and I think that the chances of such intervention rise steeply with increase in scholarship'. One heartily sympathizes with the author's impatience of the kind of approach that turns Greek drama, or any

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kind of literature suitably antique, into a dissecting specimen. The trouble is, how can we be sure that the 'natural response' of a modern audience is anything like that of a Greek? Aristotle is a very risky guide in such matters. One cannot affirm too strongly that without Greek tragedy there would have been no such thing as tragedy, but one must insist equally forcibly that Greek drama and English drama—though, in the Elizabethan period they have interesting and important features in common—are two different things. It seems to me improbable that a person who approaches Greek tragedy with the kind of interest he brings to the study of English literature can ever be capable of a 'response' that is not to a great degree 'artificial', though it need not be the less lively an interest for all that. An intelligent interest in Greek drama necessitates the same kind of readjustment conditioning intelligent appreciation of the Miracle Plays. (The 'natural response' to those remarkable works is usually 'How quaint').

Such failure to take into account the factors which make Greek drama a very special phenomenon, necessarily makes much of the comment on particular plays unconvincing. Can one feel very satisfied with such a pronouncement as this, for example?

> 'There is no meaning in the *Oedipus Tyrannus*. There is merely the terror of coincidence, and then, at the end of it all, our impression of man's power to suffer, and of his greatness because of this power'.

Surely we have heard that kind of thing far too often. Even if we try to regard it as an original proposition, do we not feel certain that there was more in it for a Greek audience? Professor Waldock deals trenchantly with the inadequate and sometimes preposterous theories of his fellow critics regarding this and other plays, but it cannot be said that what he offers as an alternative often seems much more adequate than what he has been attacking.

This is not to deny that the book contains some excellent things. There is a good chapter on 'The Documentary Fallacy', the *reductio ad absurdum* of Bradleyism, and an excellent discussion of the cathartic principle, to any formal definition of which Waldock, with characteristic good sense, does not commit himself. By far the best specifically critical chapter seems to me to be the examination of the *Philoctetes*. Waldock regards the play as a kind of grand improvisation, and although he is at times unduly severe and one-sided, his commentary is genuinely illuminating.

It is pleasant to be able to say that Professor Waldock's book has one outstanding merit; nowhere does it attempt a definition of Tragedy. For the author 'tragedy' was obviously a difficult concept. It is not so with Professor G. B. Harrison in his new book *Shakespeare's Tragedies*: 'A tragic drama may thus be defined provisionally as "a purging of the emotions of spectators affected by the experience of an acted play".' There are two kinds of tragedy, 'deep tragedy', and plays which simply have unhappy endings. After setting down the qualities essential for the writer of

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'deep tragedy', Professor Harrison arrives at a final definition: *A play which when adequately acted before a suitable audience can produce a complete cleansing of the emotions*. When one considers the amount of discussion, profitable and otherwise, which the word 'catharsis' has occasioned, one cannot help envying Professor Harrison's confidence in knowing so precisely what it means. Unfortunately he imagines that the reader will be equally clear as to its significance, and equally certain of its validity as a criterion for Shakespearean tragedy. There is indeed something dreadfully naïve about the tone of the book, unless, on the other hand, the tone is really one of patronage. Waldock's vigorous drive may sometimes degenerate into something like 'heartiness', but it never embarrasses like Harrison's insipid, 'told to the children' manner. This comes out in such a passage as the following:

> 'Some day, and maybe at no great distance, every library will be equipped with its own cinema so that when we wish to experience *Hamlet*, we shall not borrow the volume but see and hear a film record of a first-class performance. It may indeed be that as radio and television develop still further, we shall once more realize that the proper approach to poetry and speech is through the ear, and not by way of printed matter through the eye. In the meanwhile, most of us must continue perforce to approach Shakespeare's tragedies through the book'.

Has Professor Harrison really been impressed by what he has heard on the radio and seen on the screen in the way of Shakespearean production? If so, he has either been luckier than most of us or is more easily satisfied. Nothing could be healthier than the insistence that Shakespeare's plays were written to be performed, but, as Professor Harrison himself says: 'Every educated man was trained in the finer points of rhetoric, of making and listening to speeches. Many touches, therefore, which the modern reader only understands after it has been demonstrated to him, Shakespeare's audience appreciated by instinct. It was a receptive, sensitive, vibrant instrument which responded at once to the touch'. In his anxiety to shift Shakespeare from the study and back to the theatre, the author has almost ignored the poetry. Where he does mention it, it is by the way, as if it could be detached from the action and viewed separately, instead of being the vital force of the play.

The analysis of individual plays amount to little more than telling the story, with numerous and lengthy quotations unjustified by critical commentary. Such comment as we do find is at best platitudinous, at worst misleading: 'Desdemona was at first attracted towards Othello by hero worship—a very common emotion in adolescent girls—but she is uncommonly determined and attractive and soon turns from adoration to a zest for conquest'. 'In spite of its story, *Antony and Cleopatra* is a genial play in which all, no matter what frailties and errors they commit, are shown at their best in failure'. Professor Harrison's faith in the cathartic principle makes him quite incapable of perceiving the kind of masterpiece

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Macbeth is: 'As for *Macbeth*, neither the play itself (even if it had been without the blemishes caused by hasty and incomplete work) nor its hero-villain does or indeed ever could produce that purgation of deep tragedy. A general who murders his King and usurps his crown can hardly move us to admiration or sympathy unless we suffer from a warped sense of hero-worship, or believe that any eloquent or amusing person created by Shakespeare is a good man for whom all law must be suspended'. That should be a warning, if any warning is needed, of the dangers lurking for those who put their faith in definitions.

R. MAYHEAD.

SHAKESPEARE'S IMAGERY

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SHAKESPEARE'S IMAGERY, by W. H. Clemen (Methuen, 15/-).

When, some twenty to twenty-five years ago, a number of critics began independently to pay special attention to Shakespeare's imagery, many people welcomed what seemed like a return to the text from endless speculation and deduction about the psychology and motives of the characters. And this to some extent it was, in such work as Mr. Wilson Knight's *The Wheel of Fire*, Professor Spurgeon's Shakespeare Association lecture on Leading Motives in the tragedies and Mr. Middleton Murry's essay on Metaphor. But it quickly became apparent that 'imagery' could be as unprofitable an abstraction as any other, and that a concern with it was not sufficient by itself to prevent distortion and insensitiveness of approach to Shakespeare's work. Mr. Wilson Knight became increasingly occupied with large abstract patterns of symbolism: Professor Spurgeon counted and card-indexed images and made deductions about Shakespeare's personality and tastes. But whether it was a question of discussing, say, storm imagery in *Richard II* and *King Lear* in similar terms, or of relying too much upon statistics and graphs, the fault was the same—the fallacy of considering images by themselves as if they were solid particles of language that could be isolated for inspection, unmodified by rhythm, tone, tempo and general poetic context. Relevant discussion of imagery can take place only in a full analysis of given passages of verse: the special case of dramatic poetry demands also an adequate conception of poetic drama as something other than the drama of the naturalistic convention. The development of Shakespeare's imagery, then, is one aspect of the development of his dramatic poetry, and a profitable study of it can hardly stop short of the whole development of his art.

In the present book—a translation by himself of a revised and enlarged version of his *Shakespeare's Bilder* (1936)—Dr. Clemen seems to show a general awareness of these points. Despite highly respectful references to Professor Spurgeon's 'systematic' investigation and Mr. Wilson Knight's insight into mood and theme (especi-

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ally the former) he is concerned to remember the play as an organic whole and to help towards 'a more distinct conception of the history of Shakespeare's art in its entirety'. It would be possible to select from this book a small anthology of sound remarks at the level of general statement:

> 'Every metaphor, every image gains full life and significance only from its context. . . . It appears as a cell in the organism of the play . . .'
>
> 'The statistical method can never tell us anything about the relevancy, the degree of significance of the individual image . . .'

On the other hand there are numerous pronouncements of more dubious implication which sort oddly with the more perceptive statements quoted above:

> 'Shakespeare's style has not long ago been happily defined as "the product of the characters, the passions, the situations, which in fact are the living driving forces behind and determining the style".' [The quotation is from Elton.]
>
> '*Richard II* is the first instance of Shakespeare's habitual manner of endowing his heroes with unusual imagination and the poetic gift'.
>
> 'This [Macbeth's soliloquy, I, vii, 19] is very different from the gorgeousness of Spenser's allegories; it is bolder, mightier, and more dynamic, and rather recalls the passionate sublimity of Milton'.

Certain comments at once suggest themselves: of what are the characters, the passions, the situations, etc., the product, and how do we know them except through the style? Is it not implicit in the nature of poetic drama that important characters speak striking poetry? Are there not differences from Milton as obvious as those from Spenser? How far can style, plot, characters, etc., be treated on the same level as *constituents* of drama?

Dr. Clemen's general scheme is a chronological but not exhaustive consideration of the plays. After a lengthy acount of imagery in *Titus Andronicus,* the early comedies, *Henry VI* and *Richard III,* for the most part a study on familiar lines of the external and 'inorganic' use of rhetorical conventions, he finds in *Richard II* a deliberate use of highly-wrought lyrical imagery to characterize the King. In *Romeo and Juliet* he sees the older method side by side with a new language given to the lovers in which the imagery has a greater naturalness and emotional intensity. Two chapters then discuss the imagery of the middle period and its dramatic function, with examples mainly from the *Merchant of Venice* and *King John*: here Dr. Clemen emphasizes chiefly the new tendency for images to arise through association, the concrete expression of abstract qualities and the anticipation in imagery of later events. Part II deals with imagery in the tragedies: there is no detailed consideration of the problem plays, and no chapter on *Macbeth*. The characteristically mature uses are seen first in the

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speech of Hamlet, especially in his riddling irony and the use of disease metaphors to express his state of mind: *Othello* shows the use of imagery for characterization: in *King Lear* imagery becomes the means of expressing Lear's spiritual transformation and the links between the human drama, nature in general, and the cosmos: in *Antony and Cleopatra* various uses serve atmosphere, characterization, the heightening of the hero's stature and the embodiment of the 'infinite variety' of Cleopatra: in *Coriolanus* imagery suggests Shakespeare's attitude to the questions at issue and helps towards a sense of the 'omnipresence' of the tragic hero. After a chapter on *Timon* the final section examines imagery in the romances on comparatively familiar lines, making the usual suggestion of a partial return to an earlier manner.

A good deal of this is by now common form: just how much Dr. Clemen hardly seems to realize, though he admits his debt to earlier writers on the subject, especially Professor Spurgeon and Mr. Wilson Knight. His most useful and original contributions are on the growth of the freer, more spontaneous, associative method of the middle period plays, with an examination of the way imagery appears to steal into the verse through the use of an unusually concrete verb; on the way we are shown Lear's loss of contact with the outside world except through the proverbial imagery of the Fool's riddles; and on the function of the nature imagery in giving universal significance to Lear's tragedy. Throughout there are incidental passages of sensitive perception and useful comment. But they tend to be fragmentary, and there are also passages of a very different kind. One difficulty which is never properly cleared up concerns the difference between images and literal references. This is partly a matter of defining terms, but it can lead to confusions: when Antony says to Cleopatra:

> 'Egypt, thou knew'st too well
> My heart was to thy rudder tied by the strings
> And thou shouldst tow me after',

there is metaphor, certainly, but since the reference is to desertion in an actual sea-fight, the case is not the same as

> 'A rarer spirit never
> Did steer humanity'.

Similarly in the opening lines of *The Merchant of Venice*, it is difficult to see where the distinction is to be made between imagery and normal discussion of expected topics. Mr. Heilmann was on safer ground when in his book on *King Lear* he spoke of 'areas of meaning' to cover everything from metaphor to direct reference. Dr. Clemen stresses a good deal the difference between comparisons introduced by 'as' or 'like' and the direct identification of true metaphor, but he does not allow sufficiently for complications: some of the apparent similes in Shakespeare's mature style, introduced by 'as' or 'like' turn out to be far more complex than earlier direct metaphors. Incidentally he says that Posthumus uses images 'mostly

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conventional and presented in the form of simple comparisons': two of his examples 'will give you that like beasts' and 'to grin like lions' are more effective when the quotation is completed: but in any case Posthumus also uses bold metaphors: 'If you will take this audit, take this life, And cancel these cold bonds' and 'Having found the back door open Of the unguarded hearts'. Sometimes questions of interpretation are raised: Enobarbus's 'Now he'll outstare the lightning' is certainly not a reference to 'the luminous nature of Antony's character,' and Dr. Clemen assumes too easily that the 'vagabond flag upon the stream' is a stray banner on the sea: *pace* Dr. G. B. Harrison, the more natural reference seems to be to a water-plant. But more important critical lapses occur when analysis is not carried far enough. Iago's temporary adoption of Othello's rhetorical manner in the vow scene, a passage so significant for our attitude to the play as a whole, is seen by Dr. Clemen merely as showing Iago's hypocrisy; while the chapter on *Coriolanus*, stressing so much the hatred of the mob and so little the counterbalancing impression of the hero's inhumanity, is far less faithful to the total impression of the play than Mr. Wilson Knight's chapter in *The Wheel of Fire* or Mr. Traversi's essay.

Throughout Dr. Clemen pays too little attention to movement and the control it may exercise, and he can make the surprising statement that the last plays show a slowing down of the tempo of speech. The last plays, particularly *Cymbeline*, are not all of a piece, but if they have a dominant mannerism of style one would think it fairly described as a packed, breathless, parenthetical speed, full of the ellipses of hurried conversation.

R. G. Cox.

DONNE RE-CONSIDERED

THE MONARCH OF WIT: AN ANALYTICAL AND COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE POETRY OF JOHN DONNE, by J. B. Leishman (*Hutchinson's University Library*, 16/-).

Mr. Leishman seems to have started with the best of intentions. He begins his first chapter with a salutary reminder of the dangers attending 'too many generalizations about the so-called metaphysical poets and not enough insistence on the very important differences between them', and it would be hard to quarrel with the sentiments that follow: 'The ultimate purpose of such generalizations, classifications and distinctions is to increase awareness, to achieve a clearer recognition, a more intense appreciation, of the peculiar virtue, the essential *thisness*, of whatever literature we may be studying'. Mr. Leishman, then, has set himself a high standard, and it must be said that the opening chapter, though not particularly original, does contain some sound and useful observations. The likenesses as well as the differences between Donne and Jonson, and the nature of the latter's relation to the Classics are well brought out.

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The second chapter, however, 'Donne the man', strikes an alarming note. 'Much of his wit', says Mr. Leishman, 'like much even of his serious study, was an attempt to escape, through some kind of intellectual activity, from the melancholy and depression that so afflicted him during these years. Indeed, this alternation between feverish activity and deep depression seems to have been almost as characteristic of Donne as it was of Hamlet, whom Donne in so many ways resembles'. And a few pages further on we are told that 'this isolated and frustrated Donne sometimes expresses himself in language and imagery strangely similar to that of his contemporary Hamlet', as though Shakespeare's Hamlet had been a historical personage. But Mr. Leishman does not stop at Hamlet. He goes on to point out that there is in some ways an even more striking resemblance between Donne and Shakespeare's Richard II, 'the king who played many parts and who delighted to watch himself playing them, knowing that, in a sense, they were only parts, and he himself only a player, appearing in life's unsubstantial pageant now as the deputy anointed by the Lord, now as a mockery king of snow melting before the sun of Bolingbroke'. That, in tone and approach, is typical of large stretches of the book; indeed, it is upon that note that the book ends—'I will conclude by admitting that Donne has often appeared to me as a character whom Shakespeare might have invented'. The Donne we are invited to consider is a blend of romantic instability with 'interesting', almost 'modern' complexity.

After all this, one comes to the critical chapters with misgivings which a perusal of the opening could not have induced. The first of these chapters, dealing with the Epigrams, Elegies, Satires, and Verse Letters, is informed by deep concern lest some readers should imagine that the more 'outrageous' poems are the record of experiences Donne actually had or opinions he actually held, and the author is at great scholarly pains to show that a large proportion have no foundation in fact but were suggested by passages in Ovid's *Amores*. He quotes at great length, but only finds room for the barest minimum of comment. The reader who is not interested in whether the 'outrageous' poems are autobiographical or not, but is more concerned to find some critical comment on them as *poems*, will be disappointed.

The central part of this chapter is also the most substantial part of the book, the part making the most obvious claim to originality and inviting the closest attention. It takes the form of an attempt drastically to revise notions of the metaphysical poets current since the acceptance of Mr. Eliot's classic essays. After a generous tribute to Eliot, Mr. Leishman observes that he was writing 'with something of an axe to grind. He was writing, not merely as a critic, but as a poet, or as what he himself calls a 'poetic practitioner' . . .''. What, he asks in effect, is the value of the essays purely as disinterested criticism? That is the kind of question any intelligent frequenter of the essays must have asked himself time and again, though he might not be so confident as Mr. Leishman

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about the critical superiority of 'a spirit of disinterested curiosity' to a concern to give contemporary poetry a new health and vitality. But he will nevertheless welcome intelligent comment and qualification. Mr. Leishman is disarmingly bright and breezy. This is how he accounts for Eliot's early strictures on Milton.

Such a technique of simplification and distortion (while having all the appearance of keeping to the letter) enables the author to justify both Mr. Eliot and Milton. Unfortunately Mr. Leishman is not really a sincere champion of Milton, since he acknowledges later on in a footnote that Milton is for him largely a conventional value:

> 'Even on the subject of Milton, where I feel that, in the past at any rate, he really has been too narrow and dogmatic, I am not without a certain sympathy; for, greatly as I admire Milton's later poetry, I must confess that, as Dr. Johnson said of clean linen, I have no passion for it'.

Has it not occurred to him that there may be more in Eliot's objections relevant to his own distaste than he imagines? He makes great play with the famous passage about the seventeenth-century 'dissociation of sensibility', from which phrase, he tells us, came 'the coinage (not, I think, by Mr. Eliot himself) of the phrase "unified sensibility" to describe that "mechanism of sensibility which the earlier seventeenth-century poets possessed, or were supposed to have possessed; and it is perhaps not going too far to say that these two phrases alone have enabled several later writers to set up in business and drive quite a prosperous trade as literary and historical critics'. One may deplore the loose employment of such phrases as much as Mr. Leishman, but one wonders whether he would make much distinction between their valid and irresponsible uses, if one is to go by his remarks on Professor Knights' essay on Bacon. To present his case that Donne's sensibility was in fact 'dissociated', Mr. Leishman embarks on an examination of 'The Autumnall', an easy target for those who want to arraign Donne for diffuseness and disorder, backing himself up by a comforting reflection on the 'oblique confession, or recantation' contained in Mr. Eliot's 'Donne in our time' (*A Garland for John Donne*, 1931). In this essay, it will be remembered, Eliot advances the theory that Donne's appeal to the present day may be partly explained by the fact that his poetry shows little attempt to organize disparate experiences, but rather intrigues by bewildered and witty manipulation of unrelated fragments. Mr. Leishman then asks us to consider, bearing in mind what Eliot has written about Milton, 'which reveals the more unified sensibility—"The Autumnall" or the celebrated description of Eve?' One may not rank 'The Autumnall' among Donne's best poems, but at least it shows evidence of the intellectual and emotional flexibility, in the greater poems a profound imaginative range and power, which the phrase 'unified sensibility', if one is going to use it, suggests to me. But Mr. Leishman does not subject any of the greater poems to the kind of analysis he gives to 'The Autumnall', and his case against the 'dissociation of sensibility' theory consequently fails to convince.

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The chapter on the *Songs and Sonets* begins with a danger signal. One readily sympathizes with the author's concern to distinguish between the poems, and with his observation that 'while certain qualities of style are shared in varying degrees by them all, these qualities are combined in different poems with very different degrees of seriousness'. But the sequel is not encouraging: 'While, that is to say, all the poems are characteristic expressions of Donne's wit, they cannot all be regarded as characteristic expressions of his actual feelings, values, convictions and ideals'. Mr. Leishman is worried, as in the previous chapter, about the possibility of the reader making the mistake of regarding the poems with 'equal seriousness as expressions of moods and feelings and convictions which, however different, were at different times equally real'. Apparently for Mr. Leishman the only kind of experience one has the right to call 'real' is the kind that can be checked by biographical investigation. It would seem that he is not aware that the 'reality' of the experience which is the poem need have no foundation in the outward or conjecturable inward facts of the poet's life. Emily Bronte's 'Remembrance' is a case in point. Yet that the author *is* aware of this, as well as being aware of the dangers of his own approach, he clearly shows: 'It is with effects, not with causes, that we are primarily concerned, and too much speculation about possible causes may easily distract us from our proper business, which is to appreciate and estimate effects'. Mere self-exhortation, however, is no use unless followed by action, and although Mr. Leishman seems at times to be making an enormous effort to keep himself on the path of critical relevance, it can hardly be said that he succeeds. So much of the chapter is taken up with weighing the evidence regarding the identities of the various ladies to whom the poems may have been addressed, that the reader who comes to the book in the hope of finding in it a useful introduction to the work of a poet he wishes to explore, may well come to the conclusion that Donne is a fascinating specimen for scholars and biographers rather than a great English poet.

The short chapter on the Divine Poems suffers from the same externality. It raises the interesting problem of the extent to which Donne ever became a Protestant, but provides no real critical justification for it. There is hardly a comment of the simplest analytic kind on even the Holy Sonnets, which alone invite such consideration.

The book so strikingly fails to bear out the promise of the opening pages that one wonders whether Mr. Leishman has simply been unable to write the book he wished to write, or whether he has not understood the full significance of his own statement of intentions. The fact that he is so much more at home discussing Donne's debt to Ovid or the rise of the Paradox in England suggests that it is as that kind of scholar, and not as the kind of critic he feels he would like to be, that he is most happy.

R. MAYHEAD.

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